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THE PROPHET EZEKIEL

AN ANALYTICAL EXPOSITION

By ARNO C. GAEBELEIN

Author of Commentaries on Daniel, Joel, Zechariah,
Matthew, Acts, Revelation, etc.,
Editor of "Our Hope."

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INTRODUCTION

I know of no expounder of Holy Scripture on this side of the Atlantic in the same class as Mr. Gaebelein. His work on the Old Testament prophets especially is unique. To understand and expound them not for scholars but for the people, calls for a combination of gifts bestowed upon very few.

Such a teacher must believe in the inerrancy of the autographs of Scripture. He must interpret it literally except where it clearly indicates to the contrary. He must apprehend the dispensational scope of its teaching. He must know and rely upon the Holy Spirit as the revealer of the truth whose record He has inspired. He must have a working knowledge of the Hebrew text and be able to pass intelligently on questions of Biblical Criticism. He must be familiar with the writings of others who have preceded him. He must be a platform man in constant communication with the people whom he would instruct. He must be no dreamer, but wide-awake to current events and capable of looking upon and dealing with them in a practical way. He must use simple terms and express himself in plain speech.

Mr. Gaebelein meets all these demands, for which we who reap the benefits give God the praise.

Circumstances have prevented my reading all the chapters of this present volume on Ezekiel, and hence I do not undertake to endorse every detail of interpretation it contains, but a general acquaintance with the author's point of view as expressed in his volumes on Daniel, Joel, Zechariah, Matthew and Revelation leads me to commend it strongly.

Pastors, evangelists, Bible teachers and Christians generally who would be counted among the wise who understand, need such helps as this as an antidote to the false teaching flooding the church today, and to enable them to stand up against the wiles of Satan on every hand. Familiarity with the revelation of God in the Old Testament is simply indispensable to the Christian witness in this twentieth century, and to the soldiers of Christ in this crucial hour of spiritual combat.

JAMES M. GRAY.

The Moody Bible Institute,
Chicago, Ill.

The Prophet Ezekiel

INTRODUCTION

From the opening verses of the Book, which bears the name of the prophet Ezekiel, we learn that he was the son of Buzi the priest, and belonged consequently to the much honored Zadok family. That he knew the nobility of Jerusalem well and was intimate with them may be indirectly learned from the eleventh chapter. Rabbinical tradition identifies Buzi (which means "contempt") with Jeremiah and makes him a son of that prophet. There is, however, no positive evidence for this. Eleven years before the complete ruin of the city and the temple was effected by the King of Babylon, Ezekiel was carried away into the captivity. This deportation is recorded in 2 Kings xxiv:14. "And he carried away all Jerusalem, and all the princes, and all the mighty men of valor, even ten thousand captives, and all the craftsmen and smiths, none remained save the poorest sort of the people of the land." Before Ezekiel with the princes and the mighty men were taken into captivity, others had been removed to Babylon, notably Daniel and his three companions. This was in fulfillment of Isaiah xxxiv:6-7. Ezekiel must have known Daniel personally. His name is found three times in this book (chapters xiv:14, 20; xxviii:3).

Ezekiel was not a youth, as generally supposed, when he was deported to Babylon, for the matured character of a priest which appears in his writings and his full and intimate acquaintance with the temple service, render such a supposition highly improbable. Jewish tradition declares that he exercised already the prophetic office before he was carried away. The much disputed phrase "in the thirtieth year" (chapter i:1) we hope to examine more closely in our exposition.

The name Ezekiel means "strengthened by God." It has been stated by some that this is not the original name of the prophet, but his official title, which he adopted on account of his ministry among the people. Very interesting on this controverted point is the statement of a rabbinical comment. The declaration is made that the prophets of God received their significant names, so closely linked with and expressive of the character of their messages, from above and not according to the will of their earthly parents. God called them to their work and had them named accordingly before they ever entered upon their offices as prophets. We believe this may be correct, especially in view of Jeremiah i:5.

The place where we find Ezekiel is the river Chebar. This river is now known by the name *Kabour*. It emptied into the Euphrates north of Babylon and was also called *Nar-Kabari*, the great canal. Here Nebuchadnezzar had started a colony of captives. In chapter iii:15, the name of the place is given, it was at Tel-abib. In this settlement the prophet seems to have lived. Two passages in the book tell us that he had his own house (iii:24; viii:1). We also know that he was married (xxiv:16-18). The death of his wife is the only event he mentions of his personal history and that would probably have not been recorded if it were not connected with his prophetic office. The prophecies he uttered among the captives are carefully dated. The first date is found in chapter i:1-2. He began his prophetic office on the fifth day of the fourth month (Tammuz) in the fifth year of King Jehoiachin's captivity. The latest date is recorded in chapter xxix:17. Here we have the twenty-seventh year, so that the prophecies of Ezekiel cover a period of about twenty-two years.

Ezekiel's great prophetic ministry is closely connected with that of Jeremiah. When Ezekiel had his first great vision on the banks of the river Chebar, Jeremiah had

already been a prophet for thirty-five years. Only a few years more remained for this great man of God. That Ezekiel must have been acquainted with Jeremiah and his messages of warning and exhortation is more than likely. Yet it is strange there is not a single reference to Jeremiah in the entire book of Ezekiel. It is strange in view of the fact that the messages of these two men have so much in common. Critics make the assertion that Ezekiel as a prophet was moulded by the teaching of Jeremiah. Kuenen claims that Ezekiel must have been for many years the close student of Jeremiah's writings. Before Ezekiel proceeded to write his own prophecies, his mind, it is claimed, had become so saturated with the ideas and language of Jeremiah that every part of his book betrays the influence of his predecessor. This view would make Ezekiel an enthusiastic admirer and copyist of Jeremiah. But in the book of Ezekiel the phrases "Thus saith the Lord God"—"The Word of the Lord came unto me"—occur over and over again. The words he spoke, the mighty messages he delivered, were not produced by the influence of Jeremiah nor by his example, but by the Spirit of God. Other critics have even done greater dishonor to this chosen instrument of the Lord and to the Word he preached. We quote from *The New Century Bible*: "It would appear that there runs through all the prophets' activities, at least in the earlier period, a strain of mental abnormality—perhaps of actual malady. By some writers this has been supposed to be a form of catalepsy. Probably Ezekiel was no more a cataleptic than Paul; with equal probability he was what would now be called a 'psychical subject,' and as such liable to trances—and perhaps a clairvoyant." Such are the ridiculous things invented by men, who claim scholarship, and whose aim is to deny the supernatural origin of the words and the visions of the prophets of God.

The fact is that Jeremiah and Ezekiel were called by Jehovah to specific ministries. In their character and natural temperament they differed greatly. Jeremiah assuming, as a very young man, his prophetic office during the reign of Josiah, was called to deliver the messages of the awful judgments which were to come upon Jerusalem and he had to witness these in their execution. He was an extremely kind, gentle and tender-hearted man. Jeremiah is the prophet of a dying nation; the agony of Judah's prolonged death struggle is reproduced with ten-fold intensity in the inward conflict which rends the heart of the prophet. Ezekiel was of a different temperament. The deep soul exercise we find so often in Jeremiah, his tender, loving sympathies are almost entirely absent in Ezekiel. He lacked the emotional character of Jeremiah. He was a man of great energy and vigor; he was stern and had a deep sense of his human responsibility. Both prophets uncover the corrupt conditions of Judah and condemn them. The condemnations in Ezekiel are far more severe than those of Jeremiah. The style of Ezekiel is also different from that employed by his contemporary.

"The whole of his writings show how admirably he was fitted, as well by natural disposition as by spiritual endowment, to oppose the 'rebellious house,' the 'people of stubborn front and hard heart,' to whom he was sent. The figurative representations which abound throughout his writings, whether drawn out into lengthened allegory, or expressing matters of fact by means of symbols, or clothing truths in the garb of enigma, all testify by their definiteness the vigor of his conceptions. Things seen in vision are described with all the minuteness of detail and sharpness of outline which belong to real existence. But this characteristic is shown most remarkably in the entire subordina-

tion of his whole life to the great work to which he was called."*

In all this he differs from Jeremiah; and more so in the greater and more complete visions concerning the future.

There is an evident connection between the communication which Jeremiah sent from Jerusalem unto the captives in Babylon and the beginning of Ezekiel's ministry. The letter of Jeremiah is found in chapter xxix of the Book of Jeremiah. It is an interesting document. It seems to have been occasioned by a number of false prophets who had appeared among the captives, and who encouraged the rebellious and disobedient spirit which prevailed among the exiles. They prophesied falsely, led the people away and awakened the delusive hope of an early return from the captivity. While Jeremiah continued to minister to the feeble few and the poor, who were left behind, Ezekiel was engaged among the captives and contended against these false prophets and against the false hopes of the people who gave no evidences of repentance. Inasmuch as Jerusalem had not yet been completely destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar, the captives, who had listened to the false prophets, expected a speedy return to their own land. To dispel this false hope Jeremiah had sent them the message, "For thus saith the Lord, that after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place" (Jere. xxix:10). Ezekiel then labored also to dispel this false hope preached by the prophets, whom the Lord had not sent. By his stern and solemn words, by divinely commanded actions and symbols, he had to deliver the message that there was no hope for Jerusalem. When the catastrophe came at last his ministry changed. He comforts the disappointed and

*F. W. Gotch.

heartbroken people and delivers his great restoration messages.

This great prophet had to do certain divinely commanded things in the presence of the people who were living in deception after having listened to the false prophets.

In chapter iii:24-26 he had to shut himself up, bind himself and then he was made dumb.

Then he was commanded to lie upon his right side and upon his left for 430 days (chapter iv:4-8).

In chapter iv:9 he had to eat unclean bread. Then he had to shave his head and beard (chapter v:1); to carry a captive's baggage (chapter xxii:3-7); when his wife died he was not to mourn (chapter xxiv:15-20); and again he lost his speech (chapter xxiv:27). The key to all this is found in chapter xxiv:24.

The visions of glory Ezekiel had belong to some of the greatest recorded in the Word of God. Much in the beginning of the book reminds of the last book of the Bible, the Revelation. We mention a few passages to be compared: Ezekiel i with Rev. iv and v. Ezekiel iii:3 with Rev. x:10. Ezekiel viii:3 with Rev. xiii:14, 15. Ezekiel ix with Rev. vii. Ezekiel x with Rev. viii:1-5. The critics declare upon this striking correspondency that "much of the imagery of Revelation is borrowed from Ezekiel."

THE ANALYSIS OF THE BOOK.

A careful reading of the Book of Ezekiel shows, in the first place, that the Prophet received messages and saw visions before the final destruction of Jerusalem, and after that catastrophe had taken place in fulfillment of his inspired predictions he received other prophecies. The predictions preceding the fall of Jerusalem are the predictions of the judgment to fall upon the city and upon Gentile nations, the enemies of Israel. The predictions Ezekiel received after the city had been destroyed are the predictions of blessing and glory for Israel and Jerusalem in the future. The first part of the book has found a fulfillment in the destruction of the city by Nebuchadnezzar. The second part is awaiting its fulfillment at the close of the times of the Gentiles, when Israel will be regathered, restored and the glory of the Lord returns to another temple, which Ezekiel beheld in a magnificent vision. All will be accomplished when the Lord returns to dwell in the midst of His people, so that the name of the city will be "Jehovah-Shammah" —"the Lord is there" (chapter xlviii:35). These two main divisions are clearly marked in the book itself. In chapter xxxiii:21, after the Prophet had received a renewed call as watchman. We read: "And it came to pass in the twelfth year of our captivity, in the tenth month, in the fifth day of the month, that one that had escaped out of Jerusalem came unto me, saying, The City is smitten." This determines the two parts.

Part I. Predictions before the Destruction of Jerusalem. (Chapters i-xxxii.)

Part II. Predictions after the Destruction of Jerusalem. (Chapters xxxiii-xlviii.)

To show the perfect and orderly arrangement of the whole Book of Ezekiel we shall give a complete analysis.

Part I. Predictions before the Destruction of Jerusalem. Chapters i-xxxii.

Section A. Judgment Predictions concerning Jerusalem. Chapters i-xxiv.

1. *The Vision of the Glory of the Lord and the Call of the Prophet* (i-iii:14).

2. *The Judgment announced. Four signs and their meaning. The two messages.* (*"The Word of the Lord came unto me," chapters vi and vii; chapters iii*:15-*vii*:27).

3. *Visions in relation to Jerusalem* (*chapters viii-xi*).

a. The vision of abomination in the Temple. Chapter viii.

b. The vision of the man clothed in linen with the inkhorn. Chapter ix.

c. The vision of the coals of fire. Chapter x.

d. The vision concerning the leaders. The Glory departs. Chapter xi.

4. *Signs, Messages and Parables* (*chapters xii-xix*).

a. Signs given through the Prophet. Chapter xii:1-20.

b. The Message concerning a speedy judgment. Chapter xii:21-28.

c. The Message against false prophets and prophetesses. Chapter xiii.

d. The Message against the idolatrous elders. Chapter xiv.

e. The Parable of the Vine given to the fire. Chapter xv.

f. The Parable of abandoned child and Jerusalem's harlotry. Chapter xvi.

g. The Parable and Riddle of the two eagles and the vine. Chapter xvii.

h. The Message concerning the righteous judgments of God. Chapter xviii.

i. The Lamentations for the Princes of Israel. Chapter xix.

5. *Further and Final Predictions concerning the Judgment of Jerusalem* (*chapter xx-xxiv*).

a. Jehovah rehearses His mercies bestowed upon Israel. Chapter xx.
b. The impending Judgment announced. Chapter xxi.
c. Jerusalem's sins and whoredoms. Chapter xxii-xxiii.
d. The Parable of the boiling pot. The last word. Chapter xxiv.

Section B. Predictions of Judgments against the Nations. Chapters xxv-xxxii.

1. *Against Ammon, Moab, Edom and the Philistines* (*chapter xxv*).

2. *Against Tyrus and Zidon* (*chapters xxvi-xxviii*).

3. *Against Egypt* (*chapters xxix-xxxii*).

Part II. Predictions after the Destruction of Jerusalem. Chapters xxxiii-xlviii.

Section A. The Watchman and the Shepherds. Chapters xxxiii-xxxiv.

1. *The renewed call of Ezekiel as Watchman* (*chapter xxxiii*:1-20).

2. *Ezekiel's mouth opened after Jerusalem's fall* (*chapter xxxiii*:21-33).

3. *Message against the Shepherds of Israel* (*chapter xxxiv*: 1-19).

4. *The true Shepherd and Restoration promised* (*chapter xxxiv*:20-26).

Section B. Judgment announced against Mount Seir and Israel's final Restoration promised. Chapters xxxv-xxxvi.

1. *The Message against Seir and Idumea* (*chapter xxxv*).

2. *The Message of Comfort for Israel* (*chapter xxxvi*).

Section C. The Future Blessings of Israel. The Nation regathered. Their enemies overthrown. The Millennial Temple. Chapters xxxvii-xlviii.

1. *The Vision of the Dry Bones. Judah and Israel reunited* (*chapter xxxvii*).

2. *The last enemies Gog and Magog and their destruction* (*chapters xxxviii-xxxix*).

3. *The Millennial Temple and its Worship* (*chapter xl-xlvii*:12).

4. *The Division of the Land* (*chapter xlvii*:13-*xlviii*).

To this Analysis of the entire Book of Ezekiel we add a brief table, giving the different dates mentioned in the Book.

Month	Day	Year of the Captivity of Jehoiakin	Chapter
4	5	5	Chapt. i-vii
6	5	6	" viii-xix
5	10	7	" xx-xxiii
10	10	9	" xxiv-xxv
10	12	10	" xxix-xxx
11	1	11	" xxvi-xxviii
1	7	11	" xxx
3	1	11	" xxxi
10	5	12	" xxxiii
12	1	12	" xxxii:1-16
12	15	12	" xxxii:17-32
1	10	25	" xl-xlviii
1	1	27	" xxix:17-21

I. PREDICTIONS BEFORE THE FALL OF JERUSALEM

Chapter I—xxxii.

THE VISION OF THE GLORY OF JEHOVAH AND THE CALL OF THE PROPHET.

Chapter I—iii:14.

I. The Introduction.

Now it came to pass in the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, in the fifth of the month, as I was among the captives by the river Chebar, the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God. In the fifth of the month, which was the fifth year of king Jehoiachin's captivity, The word of the Lord came expressly unto Ezekiel the priest, the son of Buzi, in the land of the Chaldeans by the river Chebar; and the hand of the Lord was there upon him.

The book of Ezekiel starts with the description of a great vision, which the prophet had among the captives of the river Chebar. The first word "now," which really means "and," connects the book with Jeremiah, as Joshua is connected in the same way with Deuteronomy. The two statements "I was" and "I saw" in the first verse make it clear that Ezekiel is the author of this book. The third verse has been marked by the critics as an addition by some person, who edited the book later. There is no evidence for that. In describing his own person and descent, he no longer uses the personal pronoun. When he describes the vision itself, giving his experience, he resumes the "I"—"I looked." The "thirtieth year" has often been taken as the age of Ezekiel and upon this a parallel has been drawn between Ezekiel and our Lord. As Ezekiel was thirty years old and saw heaven open at the banks of a river, so, it is taught, the Lord Jesus was thirty years of age, when He

saw heaven open at His baptism in Jordan (Matt. iii:16; Luke iii:21). There is nothing in the text to warrant this application. The thirtieth year must be reckoned according to the Babylonian era, beginning with Nabopolassar, father of Nebuchadnezzar, who became King of Babylon 625 B. C. This was the date when Hilkiah found the book of the law in the eighteenth year of King Josiah. This was the thirtieth year before the fifth year of the captivity.

Four things are mentioned by Ezekiel in the introduction of his book. 1. The Heavens were opened. 2. He saw visions of God. 3. The Word of the Lord came upon him. 4. The hand of the Lord was upon him. The opened heavens are not mentioned elsewhere in the Old Testament. Ezekiel, the priest, is the only prophet of whom it is said that he saw the heavens opened. Four times this phrase is found in the New Testament. In Matthew iii:16 heaven was opened at the Baptism of our Lord. In John i:51 the Lord speaks of the heavens opened and the manifestation of angels, which is still future and refers to His Coming in power and glory. In Revelation iv:1 a door was opened in heaven and John heard the words "Come up hither"; it is symbolical of the time, when the true church is taken into the presence of the Lord. The last time opened heavens are mentioned is in Revelation xix:11. It will be when our Lord comes as King of kings and Lord of lords.

The opened heavens brought for Ezekiel visions of God and the Word of the Jehovah. Not visions of Jehovah and the Word of God. He saw the visions of God in His governmental dealings with Israel, but the commission to him is the commission of Jehovah, the name which denotes the closer covenant relationship with His people. The vision of opened heavens in the New Testament sense was not given to Ezekiel. New Testament believers behold heaven opened and have a vision. In the language of the Scrip-

tures, "We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor, that He by the grace of God should taste death of every man" (Heb. ii:9). Our vision in the opened heavens is the glorified Son of Man, in whom we are saved and seated in the Heavenlies, in Whom we are accepted and Whose glory we shall share. And when the Word of Jehovah came to him, calling the priest to the prophetic office, the hand of the Lord came also upon him. Opened heavens, visions, direct call and enablement by the power of God. Such is still the order for God's servants. And after the great vision is passed, the seer is upon his face (verse 28). Then Jehovah lifts him up and the Spirit entered into him (ii:2).

The phrase "the hand of the Lord was upon him" or "came upon me" is found exactly seven times in the Book of Ezekiel i:3; iii:14 and 22; viii:1; xxxiii:22; xxxvii:1 and xl:1.

II. The Vision of Glory.

And I looked, and, behold, a whirlwind came out of the north, a great cloud, and a fire infolding itself, and a brightness was about it, and out of the midst thereof as the look of glowing brass out of the midst of the fire. Also out of the midst thereof came the likeness of four living creatures. And this was their appearance; they had the likeness of a man. And every one had four faces, and every one had four wings. And their feet were straight feet; and the sole of their feet was like the sole of a calf's foot: and they sparkled like the colour of burnished brass. And they had the hands of a man under their wings on their four sides; and they four had their faces and their wings. Their wings were joined one to another; they turned not when they went; they went every one straight forward. As for the likeness of their faces, they four had the face of a man, and the face of a lion, on the right side: and they four had the face of an ox on the left side; they four also had the face of an eagle. And their faces and their wings were parted above; two wings of every one were joined one to another, and two covered their bodies. And they went every one straight forward:

whither the spirit was to go, they went; they turned not when they went. As for the likeness of the living creatures, their appearance was like burning coals of fire, like the appearance of torches: it went up and down among the living creatures; and the fire was bright, and out of the fire went forth lightning. And the living creatures ran and returned as the appearance of a flash of lightning.

And I looked at the living creatures, behold one wheel upon the earth by the living creatures, toward their four faces. The appearance of the wheels and their work was like unto the colour of a chrysolite: and they four had one likeness: and their appearance and their work was as it were a wheel in the middle of a wheel. When they went, they went upon their four sides: they turned not when they went. As for their rims, they were high and dreadful; and their rims were full of eyes round about them four. And when the living creatures went, the wheels went beside them: and when the living creatures were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up. Whithersoever the spirit was to go, they went, thither would their spirit to go; and the wheels were lifted up over against them: for the spirit of the living creature was in the wheels. When those went, these went; and when those stood, these stood; and when those were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up over against them: for the spirit of the living creature was in the wheels. And there was the likeness of an expanse upon the heads of the living creature as the colour of the terrible crystal, stretched forth over their heads above. And under the expanse their wings straight, the one toward the other: every one had two, which covered on this side, and every one had two, which covered on that side their bodies. And when they went, I heard the noise of their wings, like the noise of great waters, as the voice of the Almighty, a tumultous voice, as the noise of an host: when they stood, they let down their wings. And there was a voice from the firmament that was over their heads, when they stood, they let down their wings.

And above the expanse that was over their heads was the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone: and upon the likeness of the throne was the likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it. And I saw as the look of glowing brass, as the appearance of fire round about within it, from the appearance of his loins even upward, and from the appearance of his loins even downward, I saw as it were the appearance of fire, and it had brightness round about. As the appearance of the bow that is

in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord. And when I saw it, I fell upon my face, and I heard a voice of one that spake.

Ezekiel describes the vision of God which he saw. It is one of the greatest visions of the Bible. To explain all in this vision is beyond any expositor. Much has been written on it which is extremely fanciful and ridiculous. The vision is mentioned repeatedly in the book. In the tenth chapter we meet it again. In chapter xi:22-23 the prophet beholds the cherubim and the wheels and the glory of the Lord God above them. The glory of Jehovah is seen departing from Jerusalem by way of the mountain which is on the east side of the city (the Mount of Olives). The last time this great vision is mentioned is in chapter xliii. "And behold, the Glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the East; and His voice was like the voice of many waters; and the earth was lit up with His glory. And the appearance of the vision that I saw was according to the vision that I had seen when I came to destroy the city; and the visions were like the vision that I saw by the river Chebar, and I fell upon my face" (verses 2-4). We learn therefore that the vision Ezekiel had was the vision of the glory of Jehovah. This much is clear. The first chapter confirms this, for at the end of the vision the statement is made: "This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of Jehovah" (i:28). That it meant judgment upon the unfaithful city is learned from the tenth chapter, where one is commanded to take coals of fire from between the cherubim and to scatter them over the city (compare this with Rev. viii:5). Then the Glory of Jehovah, Ezekiel had seen, departed from the city. It left Jerusalem and the land by the East (chapter xi:22-23). Ultimately that glory will return and cover the land once more (chapter xliii:2-4).

The vision was seen coming from the North. This is generally applied to mean the threatened judgment against Judea from Babylon. A storm cloud of divine indignation was about to burst on Judea out of the North, that is, from Babylon. However, another meaning is more than likely, inasmuch as Babylon was not directly north of Jerusalem. In Psalm lxxv:6 we read: "For promotion cometh neither from the East, nor from the West, nor from the South." It is from the North, that is from above, that promotion, or help comes. In Isaiah xiv:13 the North is also given as the place of the throne of God. From out of the opened heavens from above, this great vision was sweeping before the eyes of the priest-prophet. The whirlwind, the cloud and the fire Ezekiel beholds first of all are symbols of the divine glory and often mentioned in connection with His manifestation. The Lord repeatedly appeared in a cloud. He led His people by a pillar of cloud and of fire. Sinai was enveloped in a thick cloud and Jehovah descended upon it in fire. David in describing a theophany mentions the wind, clouds and fire (Ps. xviii:8-13). Read also Habakkuk's great vision (Hab. iii). The whirlwind symbolizes Jehovah's indignation. Jeremiah had announced the coming judgment under the figure of the wind (Jere. iv:12-13). All Ezekiel saw as he looked up indicated the presence of the God of Israel and His glory, ready to deal in judgment with His unfaithful people.

Then the vision unfolds itself. First the living creatures are seen. The tenth chapter calls them by the name of cherubim. They are the same beings as described in Revelation iv:6-9. The cherubim are not symbolical figures but real beings, for they are called "living creatures." They are not angels but belong to another class. Four cherubim Ezekiel beheld with faces of the lion, the ox, the eagle and the face of man. Their position is beneath the Throne.

But while they had these four faces (representing God's creation) they had the likeness of a man.

The likeness of a man as mentioned in Ezekiel's vision is significant. First, the cherubim had "the likeness of a man" (verse 5). Then the hands of a man were seen under their wings (verse 8). When Ezekiel beheld the throne itself, the throne of God, he saw upon the throne "the likeness as the appearance of a man." And this man upon the throne was enshrouded in glory, with the rainbow about him. "And I saw as the color of amber, as the appearance of fire round about within it, from the appearance of his loins even upward, and from the appearance of his loins even downward, I saw as it were the appearance of fire, and it had brightness round about. As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about" (verse 27-28). That all this anticipates the Lord Jesus Christ, and His exaltation upon the throne, government and judgment being given into His hands, who is the glorified Man, cannot be questioned. The application of the faces of the cherubim to the fourfold character of our Lord as King, Servant, Man and Son of God is well known. However, judgment in the government of God is in Ezekiel's vision the leading reason of the prominence of these celestial beings. They occupy the same position in the last book of the Bible, the book of Revelation. When the Lamb opens the first four seals, one of the cherubim speaks. These seals are judgments. In Rev. xv:7 one of these living creatures hands to the seven judgment angels the seven vials in which the wrath of God is completed. "And one of the four living creatures gave unto the seven angels seven golden vials full of the wrath of God, who liveth forever and ever." In this solemn capacity they appear in Ezekiel's vision as the attendants of Jehovah's chariot and Jehovah's throne, which Ezekiel

beholds above the expanse above their heads. All indicates that this is the right interpretation. For instance, verse 13. There we read of coals of fire, as they appeared; lamps, or as it ought to be rendered, flaming torches, and out of the bright fire came forth lightning. These are all symbols of judgment. "And the living creatures ran and returned as the appearance of a flash of lightning" (verse 14). It denotes the swiftness of the threatened judgment.

And then the wheels and their work, the wheels in which there was the spirit of these beings, their rims (not rings) full of eyes, the orderly movements of these wheels under the direction of the spirit, is seen in this vision. Much has been made of this. The most ridiculous interpretation was made several years ago when some teacher declared that Ezekiel had the vision of an—airship! The wheels are the wheels of the chariot upon which rests the throne of God. They are representing the purposes of God in His inerrant governmental dealings with the earth. God controls it all and His Spirit directs every movement.

"Intelligence, strength, stability, and swiftness in judgment, and, withal, the movement of the whole course of earthly events, depended on the throne. This living energy animated the whole. The cherubic supporters of the throne, full of eyes themselves, moved by it; the wheels of God's government moved by the same spirit, and went straight forward. All was subservient to the will and purpose of Him who sat on the throne judging right. Majesty, government and providence united to form the throne of His glory. But all the instruments of His glory were below the firmament; He whom they glorified was above."*

That "the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain" is mentioned in connection with the Throne itself and men-

*Synopsis J. N. D.

tioned last in the vision has a blessed meaning. It reminds us of Genesis ix:13-16. "I do set My bow in the cloud and it shall be for a token of my covenant between Me and the earth. And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth that the bow shall be seen in the cloud. . . . And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth." The judgment by water was past, and upon the dark storm-cloud, which had retreated, the beautiful bow, the sign of God's mercy, appeared. God always remembers mercy in His wrath. Israel's hour of judgment had come, but the bow about the throne promised mercy to His people according to "His everlasting covenant." Judgment-vision and predictions of judgment stand first in Ezekiel's prophecy; mercy, restoration and glory are revealed after the storm-cloud has passed. Thus Ezekiel beheld the Glory of Jehovah as He himself was commissioned by the Word of Jehovah to make it known to the people.

Chapter ii-iii:14.

1. Ezekiel's Commission.

And he said unto me, Son of man, stand upon thy feet, and I will speak unto thee. And the Spirit entered into me when he spake unto me, and set me upon my feet, that I heard him that spake unto me. And he said unto me, Son of man, I send thee to the children of Israel, to rebellious nations which have rebelled against me: they and their fathers have transgressed against me, unto this very day. For they are impudent and hard hearted. I do send thee unto them; and thou shalt say unto Them, Thus saith The Lord Jehovah. And they, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear (for they are a rebellious house), yet shall know that there hath been a prophet among them.

And thou, son of man, be not afraid of them, neither be afraid of their words, though briers and thorns be with thee, and thou dost dwell among scorpions: be not afraid of their words, nor

be dismayed at their looks, though they be a rebellious house. And thou shalt speak my words unto them, whether they will hear or whether they will forbear: for they are most rebellious. But thou, son of man, hear what I say unto thee; Be not thou rebellious like that rebellious house: open thy mouth, and eat that I give thee (chapter ii:1-8).

The great vision left Ezekiel prostrate upon his face. He was affected by it in the same way as Daniel and others were. Then the voice spoke. It was not one of the Cherubim whose voice the Prophet heard. The Cherubim speak in the book of Revelation; in Ezekiel they are silent. It was Jehovah Himself, who in the vision appeared in the likeness of a man, and addressed Ezekiel. Jehovah addressed him as "Son of Man." This title is found exactly one hundred times in the book. Only Daniel, besides Ezekiel, is called by that name in the Old Testament (Dan. viii:17). Our Lord called Himself by that title. Eighty-six times we find Him using this title of Himself, as the rejected One. In Suffering, in Exaltation, in Glory and in His Second Coming He is the Son of Man. Ezekiel passed through much suffering. As we shall find in our exposition he had to bear in his person symbolically what was to come upon the nation. Suffering and shame was connected with it which he endured and despised. He must have, therefore, been called by the title "Son of Man," because he is a type of the rejected Messiah, who took Israel's sin and shame upon Himself.

The voice commanded that the Prophet was to stand upon his feet, and He, who spoke the word supplied the power to do it. "And the Spirit entered into me *when He spoke unto me*." Thus the Spirit and the Word are intimately connected. After the Spirit had entered into him the Prophet distinguished the words which Jehovah spoke, "and I heard Him that spake unto me." Hearing and knowing the Word is made possible by the Spirit.

Then Ezekiel received his commission. A comparison with Isaiah's and Jeremiah's commission shows them to be like Ezekiel's. Isaiah had a great vision. He too saw the Lord of Glory and the Seraphim, which differ from the Cherubim, crying their three-fold "Holy." Then follows the effect upon him, and the commission. "And He said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed and perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and understand with their heart, and be converted and healed" (Isaiah vi:1-11). He was chosen to pronounce hardening judgments upon the nation. Jeremiah had no vision at all; but he also was chosen to declare unto God's people their wicked ways and the impending judgments (Jeremiah i). And so Ezekiel. He is sent by Jehovah to the children Israel, to a rebellious nation. The word used here in Hebrew for nation is the same, which has been translated "heathen." It is "gojim"; indicating that the children of Israel had sunken as low as the heathen, who surrounded them. It is noteworthy that the word "rebellious" and "rebelled" is found seven times. This had become the leading characteristic of the favored people. They had turned away from Jehovah and His Word, and now the time had come when, ripe for judgment, God was to deal with them. May we think here of that solemn warning given to Christendom in Romans xi:21: "For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest He also spare not thee." God dealt with Israel on account of their unbelief and rebellious spirit. And now Gentile Christians are plunging into the same unbelief and apostasy; nominal Christendom is rebellious. A greater judgment is therefore coming upon Christendom than that which came upon the rebellious people.

To this impudent and hard-hearted people Ezekiel was

sent. The very first thing he was to say to them was that great statement which appears hundreds of times in the Old Testament scriptures, "Thus saith Jehovah God." The sender is Jehovah-God; the commission and the message are from Him. In the days of the darkest apostasy with judgment about to come, the Lord told the prophet to face these conditions and to stand in the midst of the rebellious nation with a positive "Thus saith Jehovah God." He was His mouthpiece. Such positiveness is demanded to-day. Oh! for men who, like Jeremiah and Ezekiel, speak to-day the Word, "Thus saith Jehovah God."

And Jehovah who calls and sends forth His servant gives also assurance and encouragement. He told Ezekiel not to be afraid of them or of their words. Even so the Lord had encouraged Jeremiah (chapter i:7-8). Every servant of the Lord can rest in this assurance that if he is faithful and obedient the Lord will strengthen and keep him. "Speak my words unto them;" not his own words, but Jehovah's words. Thus he heard the same command, which is given to the Lord's servants in the days when sound doctrine is no longer endured: "Preach the Word" (2 Tim. iv:1-3).

II. The Roll Eaten and the Repeated Commission.

And when I looked, behold, an hand was put forth unto me; and, lo, a roll of a book was therein; And he spread it before me; and it was written within and without: and there was written therein lamentations, and mourning, and woe.

And he said unto me, Son of man, eat that thou findest; eat this roll, and go speak unto the house of Israel. So I opened my mouth, and he caused me to eat that roll. And he said unto me, Son of man, cause thy belly to eat, and fill thy bowels with this roll that I give thee. Then did I eat it; and it was in my mouth as honey for sweetness.

And he said unto me, Son of man, go, get thee unto the house of Israel, and speak with my words unto them. For thou art not sent to a people of a strange speech and of an hard language, but to the

house of Israel; Not to any people of a strange speech and of an hard language, whose words thou canst not understand. Surely, had I sent thee to them, they would have hearkened unto thee. But the house of Israel will not hearken unto thee; for they will not hearken unto me: for all the house of Israel are impudent and hardhearted. Behold, I have made thy face strong against their faces, and thy forehead strong against their foreheads. As an adamant harder than flint have I made thy forehead: fear them not, neither be dismayed at their looks, though they be a rebellious house. Moreover he said unto me, Son of man, all my words that I shall speak unto thee receive in thine heart, and hear with thine ears. And go, get thee to them of the captivity, unto the children of thy people, and speak unto them, and tell them, Thus saith the Lord God; whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear. Then the spirit took me up and I heard behind me a voice of a great rushing, saying, Blessed be the glory of the Lord from his place. I heard also the noise of the wings of the living creatures that touched one another, and the noise of the wheels over against them, and a noise of a great rushing. So the spirit lifted me up, and took me away, and I went in bitterness, in the heat of my spirit; but the hand of the Lord was strong upon me (chapter ii:9; iii:14).

He is commanded to open his mouth and to eat, after the warning not to be rebellious. He then received a scroll from a hand, no doubt, the hand he had seen in the vision. It was written within and without with lamentations, mourning and awe. He was commanded to eat and it was like honey in his mouth. We are reminded at once of Zechariah's flying scroll (Zech. v:1-4); of the scroll written within and on the backside, sealed with seven seals, which in John's vision the Lamb of God received to open the seals (Rev. v and vi); and of the little book (or scroll) which John received and ate, which was sweet in his mouth but bitter in his belly (Rev. x:9-10). These scrolls have all one meaning. They are symbolical of the Word itself, the message of judgment and tribulation which are written therein. All is symbolical and contains many spiritual

and helpful lessons. The Word must be received; it must be eaten. The prophet obeyed and ate. It was self-surrender and therefore, though the message he was to bear was a hard message, it was sweet to him. Jeremiah, too, speaks of a similar experience. "When Thy words were found, I did eat them; and Thy Word was to me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart" (Jer. xv:16). No servant of God can speak thus unless he receives the Word, feeds on it himself, eats what the Lord has given and finds out the sweetness of obedience and self-surrender. The Word to be spoken, the message to be given, must come from Jehovah. "I have put my words in thy mouth" was spoken to Jeremiah (chapter i:9); and Ezekiel makes the same experience. And our Lord, the true Son of Man, said that His meat and drink was to do the will of His Father. He, too, fed on His Word and was obedient to it.

In Ezekiel's experience there is a definition of divine inspiration. The prophet received, accepted, took it in and then gave it out. "Son of Man, go, get thee unto the house of Israel, *and speak with my words unto them*." This is inspiration. The Messages of God were given to the prophets in the words of God. Such is the definition of inspiration in the New Testament. "Which things also we speak," saith the Apostle, "not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Spirit teacheth" (1 Cor. ii:13). May all the Lord's people receive His Word, eat His Word, speak forth His Word and find that it is indeed sweeter than honey and the honeycomb.

Jehovah predicts failure for the message and the messenger. The house of Israel will not hearken unto *thee;* for they will not hearken unto *Me*. It was to make no difference with the prophet. His commission was to speak Jehovah's words, whether they heard or not. All this would be branded by our own generation as extremely "pessimistic."

That the message and the messenger should not be successful is an unpalatable statement to well-meaning and enthusiastic Christians. Yet this very fact is predicted for the last days. "The time will come when they shall not endure sound doctrine." Then the prophet was taken up by the Spirit. Behind him a voice was heard, "Blessed be the Glory of Jehovah from this place."

Cherubim and wheels are in motion. He is lifted up and Jehovah's hand was strong upon him.

JUDGMENT ANNOUNCED. FOUR SIGNS AND TWO MESSAGES.

Chapter iii:15-vii:27.

The next section of the Book of Ezekiel extends from chapter iii:15 to the close of the seventh chapter. Here we find that the Lord laid upon the Prophet the great responsibilities as the watchman over the house of Israel and gave him the message. Then the Prophet had to enact four signs. The signs of the tile upon which he pictured Jerusalem (iv:1-3); the sign of the Prophet's posture, laying 390 days upon his left side and forty days on his right and prophesying during this time against the doomed city (verses 4-8); the sign of the food he was to eat, and its preparation; this covers the same period of 390 days (verses 9-17); the last sign was that of shaving the hair from head and face, and dividing it into three parts. This fourth sign (chapter v) is minutely explained and symbolizes like the other signs the judgments against Jerusalem. Two solemn messages of denunciations close this section. The first message predicts the sword to fall upon the land and the people and their subsequent dispersion (chapter vi). The second message predicts the end which was to come upon the four corners of the land. The great desolation is described in a marvellous

way. The seventh chapter, which contains this second message is one of the sublimest in the book. Both messages end in the same way: "And they shall know that I am Jehovah."

Chapter iii:15-27.

I. The new charge and Ezekiel's new experience.

Then I came to them of the captivity at Tel-abib, that dwelt by the river of Chebar, and I sat where they sat, and remained there astonished among them seven days. And it came to pass at the end of seven days, that the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul. Again, When a righteous man doth turn from his righteousness, and commit iniquity, and I lay a stumbling-block before him, he shall die: because thou hast not given him warning, he shall die in his sin, and his righteousness which he hath done shall not be remembered; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Nevertheless if thou warn the righteous man, that the righteous sin not, and he doth not sin, he shall surely live, because he is warned; also thou hast delivered thy soul.

And the hand of the Lord was there upon me; and he said unto me, Arise go forth into the plain, and I will there talk with thee. Then I arose, and went forth into the plain: and, behold, the glory of the Lord stood there, as the glory which I saw by the river of Chebar, and I fell on my face. Then the spirit entered into me, and set me upon my feet, and spake with me, and said unto me, Go, shut thyself within thine house. But thou, O son of man, behold, they shall put bands upon thee, and shall bind thee with them, and thou shalt not go out among them: And I will make thy tongue cleave to the roof of thy mouth, that thou shalt be dumb, and shalt not be to them a reprover: for they are a rebellious house. But when I speak with thee, I will open thy mouth, and thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God;

He that heareth, let him hear; and he that forbeareth, let him forbear: for they are a rebellious house (chapter iii:15-27).

The Prophet had been transported from the place mentioned in chapter i:1 to Tel-abib, which was also on the river Chebar. Here a number of captives dwelt. For seven days he sat in their presence astonished and did not open his lips. Was it their sad condition, or the knowledge of their rebellious spirit, or the threatening judgments which produced this silence? Most likely these things filled the Priest-Prophet with unspeakable sorrow and sadness, so that he could not find words. And the captives must have read the burden of his soul in his countenance. The scene reminds us of Job and his three friends, who "sat down with him upon the ground seven days and seven nights, and none spoke a word unto him, for they saw that his grief was very great" (Job ii:13). Job broke the silence by cursing his day. But the silence of Ezekiel's seven days was broken by the Lord Himself. He addressed the Prophet and told him that He had made him "a watchman unto the house of Israel." His duty and responsibility in that capacity was twofold; first to hear the Lord's Word from His own lips, then to give the warning from Him. Warning is the important call of a watchman (chapter xxxiii:2, 6, 7; Isaiah lii:8; lvi:10; Jer. vi:17). If the appointed watchman does not hear the Word as it comes from Jehovah, he cannot sound the alarm. The false prophets in Israel, who did not warn the people, but said, "Peace, peace!" when there was no peace, followed their own dreams instead of the Word. They did not believe the solemn messages God had given through former prophets. That was the curse among the professing people of God then. It produced a false security, decline and apostasy; it hastened the impending judgments of God. It is the curse to-day in the professing church. His Word is rejected. The solemn truths con-

cerning "judgment to come" upon an ungodly age and apostate "church" are not heeded and mostly rejected. The man who sounds the warning and stands by the declarations of God's Word is as unpopular with the people today as Jeremiah and Ezekiel were in their days.

The Prophet was commissioned not to warn the nation as such, but to warn individuals. The wicked and the righteous are mentioned and the Prophet's responsibility in delivering the message. If he does not warn the wicked to turn from his wicked way to save his life, his blood will be required from his hands. If he is faithful and the wicked does not hear the warning, the wicked shall die, but the faithful messenger delivers his own soul. And so with the righteous, who turns from his righteous acts and commits iniquity. He is threatened with death; but if he sins not and is warned he shall live. After hearing the warning Word each is to bear the consequences of his own conduct. The nation as such was rebellious. Its doom could not be averted. Yet God in His long-suffering still gave the individual an opportunity to escape the threatening judgment, that by hearing the Word he might live. This gracious offer concerned the wicked. The righteous one in Israel, who obeyed the law and did acts of righteousness had to continue in obedience; if he failed in the midst of the great national crisis when judgment was about to fall, his former righteous deeds could not save his life. He also would be swept away and die in his sins. The first part of the third chapter reveals the hardened condition of the nation; there was no remedy. The second part reveals the possibility of the deliverance of all who harkened to the divine warning and turned from their evil ways.

The passage, as well as the corresponding one in chapter xxxiii:1-20, has been often used in the defence of what is termed "falling from Grace," that a true believer, who is

saved by Grace, may by sinning become unsaved again and then perish in his sins like the wicked. The words "fallen from Grace" are found only once in the Bible, that is in Gal. v:4. The context shows what they mean. If a believer goes to the law to be justified before God, if he tries by his own works, and by ordinances, to be righteous before God, he abandons the ground of Grace. The dispensation in which we live is the dispensation of Grace; Grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord (Rom. v:21). The message delivered by God to Ezekiel is in fullest keeping with the character of the law-covenant, though Grace is also manifested in it. Righteousness has not the meaning here as in the New Testament. We are constituted righteous by faith in Jesus Christ. It is now not the question of doing righteous deeds in order to be saved and live. We are saved by Grace through faith. "Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned as of grace but as of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him, who justifieth the ungodly, his faith is reckoned for righteousness" (Romans iv:4). And he who is justified by faith has peace with God. The true believer may sin, but he does not deliberately practice and live in sin, for "he that is born of God doth not commit (practice) sin" (1 John iii:9). If he falls in sin a gracious provision is made. We have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and therefore we can confess our sins; forgiveness and cleansing follow according to the divine promise (1 John i:9; ii:1-2).*

After this solemn charge the hand of the Lord rested upon Ezekiel and he was commanded to go into the plain, where

*The responsibility of Ezekiel in delivering the message was great. Every servant of the Lord Jesus Christ with a far greater message than Ezekiel's should also feel that responsibility. If it were felt more, there would be more earnestness, more prayer and greater results.

Jehovah would talk with him. He obeyed and beheld again the Glory of the Lord, which he had seen by the river of Chebar. Once more he fell on his face. Then the Spirit entered into him and said unto him: "Go, shut thyself within thy house." He had no opportunity to exercise his office as watchman and deliver the warning message. Immediately after the charge he was commanded to separate himself from the captives and then became a prisoner in his house. But more than that. They were to put bands upon him and bind him with them.

Does this mean that the people would bind him so that he could not leave the house? It probably meant the opposite. He was to shut himself in the house and they came with bands and bound him, to get him out of the house by force. But he was not to go among them. Then God Himself made the Prophet dumb. "And I will make thy tongue cleave to the roof of thy mouth, that thou shalt be dumb, and shalt not be to them a reprover, for they are a rebellious house" (verses 25-26). First he was to be bound so that he could not go amongst them, and then God Himself would make him dumb so that he could not reprove the people. Different suggestions have been made about the meaning of the condition in which the Prophet was put. Some have even declared that there is a contradiction in all this, in view of verses 16-21, while rationalistic expositors think that the Prophet suffered from some nervous disorder which deprived him temporarily of the power of speech That the Prophet was unfitted by God to go amongst the people and deliver the message in public was a testimony against the nation. They were beyond hope, therefore, on account of their rebelliousness; he was not to be a reprover to them. It witnessed to the fact that judgment upon the nation could not now be arrested. And yet his dumbness was not complete nor constant. The last verse of the chapter

makes this clear. "But when I speak with thee, I will open thy mouth, and thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; he that heareth let him hear; and he that forbeareth, let him forbear; for they are a rebellious house." Thus the Prophet was completely cast upon Jehovah. Jehovah directed him in being silent or in uttering His message. Blessed are all servants of the Lord, who know the same path of dependence and who declare the Word of the Lord, "Thus saith the Lord," whenever they speak.

The Prophet's mouth was opened completely and his power of speech permanently restored after Jerusalem had fallen. "And it came to pass in the twelfth year of our captivity, in the tenth day, in the fifth day of the month, that all that had escaped out of Jerusalem came unto me, saying, the city is smitten. Now the hand of the Lord was upon me in the evening, before he that escaped came; and had opened my mouth, until he came to me in the morning; and my mouth was opened, and I was no more dumb" (chapter xxxiii:21-22). This had been previously announced. "In that day shall thy mouth be opened to him which is escaped, and thou shalt speak, and be no more dumb; and thou shalt be a sign unto them, and they shall know that I am the Lord" (chapter xxiv:27). Thus Ezekiel's dumbness was a sign to the nation; the sign of God's displeasure and the coming judgment upon Jerusalem.

THE FOUR SYMBOLICAL SIGNS.

Chapters iv and v.

The divine predictions of the impending doom for Jerusalem was not believed by the exiles. The messages of the false prophets who moved among them encouraged the rebellious spirit and therefore the threatened disaster was thought incredible by the captives. The mission of Ezekiel was to dispel the false hope of a speedy return to the land.

After he had received his solemn commission and the message he was to deliver to the rebellious people, he is commanded to enact four signs, which were to teach the captives that which would speedily come upon their beloved city Jerusalem.

I. The Sign of the Tile. The first symbolical sign is that of the tile, which the Prophet was to use to picture the coming siege of Jerusalem.

> Thou also, son of man, take thee a brick, and lay it before thee, and portray upon it the city, Jerusalem; And lay siege against it, and build forts against it, and cast a mound against it; set the camps also against it, and set battering-rams against it roundabout. Moreover take thou unto thee an iron plate, and set it for a wall of iron between thee and the city; and set thy face against it, and it shall be besieged, and thou shalt lay siege against it. This shall be a sign to the house of Israel (verses 1-3).

The word translated "tile" means a brick. The Babylonians used clay bricks to keep their records; whole libraries consisting of a very large number of such bricks have been uncovered by the spade of the excavator. These bricks were almost square, fourteen by twelve inches. Many have been found which have engraven upon them various building plans and astrological figures. Such a brick Ezekiel was commanded to take and draw upon the soft clay surface a city, which was to represent Jerusalem. The second verse shows Jerusalem in the state of siege. The coming calamity was vividly pictured in this first sign. The Prophet was also to take an iron pan (literally: plate) and use it for a wall of iron between him and the city and set his face against it. In all this the Prophet was to show Jehovah's action against Jerusalem. He impersonated Jehovah in laying siege against it in marking the clay brick and raising the iron-plate between himself and the city. In connection with the latter sign we may well think of Isaiah lix:2: "Your iniquities have separated between you

and your God." Thus in this first sign the certainty of the successful siege of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans was set forth in plain view of the captives. Yet they heard not and continued their foolish dreams and believed rather the false prophets. God has everywhere set forth in His Word coming judgments. Our age, so self-secure and boasting in many of its godless achievements, will end in a great judgment-catastrophe. Every portion of God's Word testifies of this fact. God will fulfil the prophecies of His servants the prophets. The past fulfilment of God's threatened judgments vouch for the literal fulfilment of those still future. Yet our blinded age (2 Cor. iv:4) heeds it not. More than ever they say, "Peace and safety," and ridicule God's message and God's messengers, who give a faithful warning.

II. The Sign of the Prophet's Physical Position. While in the first sign Jehovah's action against Jerusalem was pictured, in the next sign a portrayal is given of the punishments which should come upon the people. The Prophet's divinely commanded actions witnessed beforehand what should come upon the disobedient, rebellious nation. In his own person Ezekiel had to taste the great degradation and judgment which was about to become the portion of the people.

> Lie thou also upon thy left side, and lay the iniquity of the house of Israel upon it: according to the number of the days that thou shalt lie upon it thou shalt bear their iniquity. For I have laid upon thee the years of their iniquity, according to the number of the days, three hundred and ninety days: so shalt thou bear the iniquity of the house of Israel. And when thou hast accomplished them, lie again on thy right side, and thou shalt bear the iniquity of the house of Judah forty days: I have appointed thee each day for a year. Therefore thou shalt set thy face toward the siege of Jerusalem, and thine arm shall be uncovered, and thou shall pro-

phesy against it. And, behold, I will lay bands upon thee, and thou shalt not turn thee from one side to another till thou hast ended the days of thy siege (verses 4-8).

Expositors and critics have interpreted this and the other signs in various ways. Higher Criticism maintains that the whole description is purely ideal and that the Prophet never did in person what was asked of him. They point to the fact that nowhere is a statement made that he did these things. We quote from the "Expositor's Bible":

"It is clear that these signs could never have been enacted, either in view of the people or in solitude, as they are here described. It may be doubted whether the whole description is not purely ideal, representing a process which passed through the prophet's mind, or was suggested to him in the visionary state but never actually performed."

Other critics have tried to explain the Prophet's actions by some kind of a catalepsy, from which, they claim, he suffered. All these theories are pure inventions, springing from a denial of inspiration. They make much of the physical impossibility of this command to lie continuously for 390 days on the left side and for 40 days on the right side. But it does not say that the Prophet should be in that position day and night during that allotted time. The fact that he was to prepare food to eat during these days excludes this extreme view. The Prophet no doubt carried out the divine command as he understood it, and thereby gave the people a sign concerning their iniquity and the deserved punishment. But what do the 390 days of Israel and 40 days of Judah mean? The text shows that the days here mean years.* The 390 and 40 days make 430 days.

*Some have concluded on account of this passage, that throughout the prophetic word wherever "days" are mentioned, they mean "years." This is incorrect. The "year-day" theory is not a scriptural one. Where we find days, it means days unless the text itself, as it is here in Ezekiel, explains the days as years.

This reminds us of Exodus xii:40-41 where the sojourning of the children of Israel who dwelt in Egypt is given as 430 years. The 40 years of Judah recall the years of wandering in the wilderness. The 390 days apply to the period of Israel's unfaithfulness, which lead up to their punishment. These 390 years must be reckoned from Jeroboam, who was the first King of the house of Israel by divine appointment as revealed through Ahijah, the Prophet (1 Kings xi:31). The 40 years of Judah, for which Ezekiel was to lie upon his right side for 40 days must mean the 40 years of Solomon's reign. Solomon went after Ashtoreth, the vile goddess of the Zidonians. Judah worshipped besides Ashtoreth, Chemosh, the god of the Moabites and Milcom, the god of Ammon (1 Kings xi:33). Thus the captives were reminded by the Prophet's painful position of the shameful history of the long years of apostasy of their nation. But more than that. The Lord said expressly to Ezekiel: "I have laid upon thee the years of their iniquity . . . so shalt thou bear the iniquity of the house of Israel." By consulting other passages in the Old Testament, especially in Exodus and Leviticus,* it will be found that the phrase "bear their iniquity" always means to endure the punishment due to sin or iniquity. Ezekiel's sign therefore pictured the actual results in punishment, which was now to fall upon the people for their sins. The 390 years and the 40 years therefore must be primarily applied to the period of their punishment. The Prophet, therefore, had put upon him suffering typical of the nation's punishment. He is in this a blessed type of the great Sin-bearer, who bore our sins in His own body on the tree. Of Him it is written, "He shall bear their iniquities." And the believing remnant of Israel in a future day, looking

*Exod. xxviii:38-43; Lev. v:1, 17, vii:8, x:17, etc.

upon Him, whom they pierced, will yet confess "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him and with His stripes we are healed" (Isaiah liii:5).

III. The Sign of the Famine and the Defiled Bread. The siege of Jerusalem had been portrayed in the tile sign; the hardships in divine judgments in the second and the third sign describes additional punishments to come upon Jerusalem.

> Take thou also unto thee wheat, and barley, and beans, and lentils, and millet, and spelt, and put them in one vessel, and make thee bread thereof, according to the number of the days that thou shalt lie upon thy side, three hundred and ninety days shalt thou eat thereof. And thy meat which thou shalt eat shall be by weight, twenty shekels a day: from time to time shall thou eat it. Thou shalt drink also water by measure, the sixth part of an hin: from time to time shalt thou drink. And thou shalt eat it as barley cakes, and thou shalt bake it with dung that cometh out of man, in their sight. And the Lord said, Even thus shall the children of Israel eat their defiled bread among the Gentiles, whither I will drive them (verses 9-13).

Then the Priest-Prophet, horrified at the defilement he was to be subjected to, spoke to Jehovah and received an answer from Him granting his request and giving further instructions about the sign.

> Then said I, Ah, Lord God! behold, my soul hath not been polluted: for from my youth up even till now have I not eaten of that which dieth of itself, or is torn in pieces; neither came there abominable flesh into my mouth. Then he said unto me, Lo, I have given thee cow's dung for man's dung, and thou shalt prepare thy bread therewith. Moreover he said unto me, Son of man, behold, I will break the staff of bread in Jerusalem: and they shall eat bread by weight, and with care; and they shall drink water by measure, and with astonishment: That they may want bread and water, and be astonished one with another, and consume away for their iniquity (verses 14-17).

This sign then shows the horrors of the siege of Jerusalem and what was to come upon the people during the period of their punishment. The wheat, barley, beans, lentils, millet and fitches* were to be put into one vessel, because a little of each was available. To eat things by weight and not to be satisfied with it, was announced through Moses as one of the threatened judgments. "And when I have broken the staff of your bread, ten women shall bake your bread in one oven, and they shall deliver you your bread again by weight; and ye shall eat and not be satisfied" (Lev. xxvi:26). The sign meant famine as the Lord told Ezekiel (verse 16).

Then uncleanness, defilement, is added. The famine stands connected with the siege, the defilement refers more to that, which was to come upon them in their captivity among the Gentiles. It pictured the unclean religious conditions into which the people were to be plunged during the exile. "Even thus shall the children of Israel eat their defiled bread among the Gentiles, whither I will drive them." The same judgment was announced by Hosea. "They shall not dwell in the Lord's land; but Ephraim shall return to Egypt, and they shall eat unclean things in Assyria. They shall not offer wine to the Lord, neither shall they be pleasing unto Him; their sacrifices shall be unto them as the bread of mourners; all that eat thereof shall be polluted" (Hosea ix:3-4). And Ezekiel baked the bread in the prescribed way, while no doubt, the captives looked on in horror, that a Priest like Ezekiel could act thus. The sign found its fulfillment. God's predicted judgments were always literally fulfilled. God means what He has declared in His Word. The future will yet witness to it.

*Or spelt, a kind of corn.

IV. The Sign of the Shaving of the Head and the Face.

And thou, son of man, take thee a sharp knife, take thee a barber's razor, and cause it to pass upon thine head and upon thy beard: then take thee balances to weigh, and divide the hair. Thou shalt burn with fire a third part in the midst of the city, when the days of the siege are fulfilled: and thou shalt take a third part, and smite about it with a knife: and a third part thou shalt scatter in the wind; and I will draw out a sword after them. Thou shalt also take thereof a few in number, and bind them in thy skirts. Then take of them again, and cast them into the midst of the fire, and burn them in the fire; for thereof shall a fire come forth into all the house of Israel (chapter v:1-4).

In this final sign we have the symbol of what was to befall the nation as such. Through the Prophet Isaiah a prediction had been given concerning the King of Assyria, which explains the meaning of the sharp knife. "In the same day shalt the Lord shave with a razor that is hired, namely, by them beyond the river, by the King of Assyria, the head, and the hair of the feet, and it shall also consume the beard" (Isa. vii:20). The sharp knife* represents in Ezekiel's sign the King of Babylon. He was Jehovah's instrument executing His wrath. The people are represented by the hairs. The sharp knife, the sword of justice, was to cut them off. The third part of the hair burned with fire pictured the fate of a part of the people during the siege. Besides the fire, the pestilence and the famine were to consume them (verse 12). Another part was to be destroyed by the sword round about Jerusalem, while still another part should be scattered unto all the winds, that is dispersed among the Gentiles, where the sword would also follow the fugitives. Only a few in number, a small remnant were to be preserved which was symbolically enacted when Ezekiel took a few hairs and bound them in his skirt. But even some of them should

*The literal meaning is sword, the same as in verse 12.

be put into the fire. Such a remnant, saved and preserved and ultimately blessed, is often mentioned in the prophetic Word. See Isaiah vi:13; x:22; Jere. xxiii:3; Ezek. vi:8; Zech. xiii:8-9. All these judgments came upon the city and upon the nation. A remnant also was saved and in due time returned.

Thus saith the Lord God; This is Jerusalem: I have set it in the midst of the nations and countries that are round about her. And she hath changed my judgments into wickedness more than the nations, and my statutes more than the countries that are round about her: for they have refused my judgments and my statutes, they have not walked in them. Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Because ye multiplied more than the nations that are round about you, and have not walked in my statutes, neither have kept my judgments, neither have done according to the judgments of the nations that are round about you; Therefore thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I, even I, am against thee, and will execute judgments in the midst of thee in the sight of the nations. And I will do in thee that which I have not done, and whereunto I will not do any more the like, because of all thine abominations. Therefore the fathers shall eat the sons in the midst of thee, and the sons shall eat their fathers; and I will execute judgments in thee, and the whole remnant of thee will I scatter into all the winds. Wherefore, as I live, saith the Lord God; Surely, because thou hast defiled my sanctuary with all thy detestable things, and with all thine abominations, therefore will I also diminish thee; neither shall mine eye spare, neither will I have any pity. A third part of thee shall die with the pestilence, and with famine shall they be consumed in the midst of thee; and a third part shall fall by the sword round about thee; and I will scatter a third part into all the winds, and I will draw out a sword after them. Thus shall mine anger be accomplished, and I will cause my fury to rest upon them, and I will be comforted: and they shall know that I, the Lord, have spoken it in my zeal, when I have accomplished my fury in them. Moreover I will make thee waste, and a reproach among the nations that are round about thee, in the sight of all that pass by. So it shall be a reproach and a taunt, an instruction and an astonishment unto the nations that are round about thee, when I shall execute judgments in thee in anger and in fury and in furious rebukes,

I, the Lord, have spoken it. When I shall send upon them the evil arrows of famine, which shall be for their destruction, and which I will send to destroy you: and I will increase the famine upon you, and will break your staff of bread: So will I send upon you famine and evil beasts, and they shall bereave thee; and pestilence and blood shall pass through thee; and I will bring the sword upon thee. I, the Lord, have spoken it (verses 5-17).

After these few signs had announced to the captives what was to come upon the city and upon the people, Jehovah begins to speak. The solemn words we have quoted need but little comment. He speaks of Jerusalem's exalted place, her wickedness, which had become greater than that of the nations, her disobedience and her judgments. One must read the Lamentations of Jeremiah to find how all was fulfilled in the final overthrow of Jerusalem. Compare verse 10 with Lament. iv:10. How terrible are the judgments of a righteous and holy God! The calamity which fell upon Jerusalem and the land through the hands of Nebuchadnezzar was repeated on a more fearful scale in the year 70, after the greater One than Ezekiel, the Lord Jesus Christ, had given His solemn warnings and had wept over the city. And once more will Jerusalem taste of wrath and judgment in that end of the age, which is called the great tribulation. And after that the day-break, when Jerusalem will rise out of the dust and her history of shame and sorrow will be ended.

THE TWO JUDGMENT MESSAGES.

Chapter vi-vii.

Two judgment messages follow. Each message is a direct communication from Jehovah to the Prophet. "And the Word of the Lord came unto me." Both messages end in the same way: "And they shall know that I am the Lord." In the first message the judgment of the whole land is announced. The second message announces the

completeness of the judgment. The predicted end is described with its accompanying perplexities and sufferings.

I. The Coming Judgment against the Mountains and the Land.

> And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, set thy face toward the mountains of Israel, and prophesy against them, And say, Ye mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord God; Thus saith the Lord God to the mountains, and to the hills, to the rivers, and to the valleys, Behold I, even I, will bring a sword upon you, and I will destroy your high places; and your altars shall be desolate, and your images shall be broken; and I will cast down your slain men before your idols. And I will lay the dead carcasses of the children of Israel before their idols; and I will scatter your bones round about your altars. In all your dwelling-places the cities shall be laid waste, and the high places shall be desolate; that your altars may be laid waste and made desolate, and your idols may be broken and cease, and your images may be cut down, and your works may be abolished. And the slain shall fall in the midst of you; and ye shall know that I am the Lord (chapter vi:1-7).

The denunciation against the mountains of Israel stands in the first place. Jerusalem was mostly in view in the preceding chapters, but now the Lord announces that the whole land is to become desolate through His wrath. The mountains of Israel's land were used as places for idolatry; they are called "the high places." Images and shrines were erected upon these heights where the vile and idolatrous worship of heathen gods was practiced. These images were idols dedicated to sun-worship. That Israel would become idolatrous had been revealed to Moses, who also announced the judgment which should ultimately fall upon Israel for their idolatry. "And I will destroy your high places, and cut down your images, and cast your carcasses upon the carcasses of your idols, and my soul shall abhor you. And I will make your cities waste, and bring your sanctuaries unto desolation, and I will not smell the savor of your sweet

odors. And I will bring the land into desolation, and your enemies which dwell therein shall be astonished. And I will scatter you among the nations and will draw out a sword after you and your land shall be desolate, and your cities waste" (Lev. xxvi:30-33). This remarkable prophetic statement was made to Moses, who wrote it hundreds of years before. And now the time for its fulfillment had at last come. God in His patience had delayed the judgment, but when the time had come He remembered all that Moses heard from His lips and executed His own Word. A careful comparison of the passage in Leviticus with verses 3-6 of this chapter shows the literal fulfillment.

> Yet will I leave a remnant that ye may have some that shall escape the sword among the nations, when ye shall be scattered through the countries. And they that escape of you shall remember me among the nations whither they shall be carried captives, because I shall have broken their whorish heart, which hath departed from me, and with their eyes, which go a whoring after their idols: and they shall loathe themselves for the evils which they have committed in all their abominations, and they shall know that I am the Lord, and that I have not said in vain that I would do this evil unto them. Thus saith the Lord God: Smite with thine hand, and stamp with thy foot, and say, Alas for all the evil abominations of the house of Israel! for they shall fall by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence. He that is far off shall die of the pestilence; and he that is near shall fall by the sword; and he that remaineth and is besieged shall die by the famine; thus will I accomplish my fury upon them. Then shall ye know that I am the Lord, when their slain men shall be among their idols round about their altars, upon every high hill, in all the tops of the mountains, and under every green tree, and under every thick oak, the place where they did offer sweet savour to all their idols. So will I stretch out my hand upon them, and make the land desolate; yea, more desolate than the wilderness toward Diblath, in all their habitations: and they shall know that I am the Lord (verses 8-14).

The Lord promised that in mercy He would leave a

remnant. That remnant would acknowledge the evil they had done. "They shall loathe themselves for the evils which they have committed in all their abominations." This is the result of Jehovah's action towards themselves. The words "because I am broken with their whorish heart" are literally translated "when I shall have broken their whorish heart which has departed from me." No judgment which came upon God's peculiar people ever made a complete end of the nation. A remnant always remained and turned to the Lord. During the greatest and longest judgment which has ever befallen the people Israel, their world-wide dispersion in the present age, there is also a remnant amongst them (Romans xi:5). And when Jehovah resumes His dealings with them during the last seven years of the Times of the Gentiles, the time of their greatest trouble, a remnant will turn to Him and be converted. That remnant will be carried through the mighty judgments of the end time and receive the blessings and the glory of the promised kingdom.

Ezekiel was also commanded to smite with his hand and to stamp with his foot. Clapping the hands and stamping with the feet may denote exultation (chapter xxv:6). But here it is more an outward expression of the vehemence of the judgment. In chapter xxi:7 we read of the Lord smiting His hands. "I will also smite mine hands together, and I will cause my fury to rest, I the Lord have said it." A repetition of the impending judgments forms the conclusion of this first message.

Chapter vii.

II. The Second Judgment Message. The End is at Hand. The Complete Judgment.

The seventh chapter which contains the second judgment message, closes the first prophecy of Ezekiel. All the different elements and phases of judgment which had just been

foretold by the Prophet are now gathered up in this final great utterance. As the chapter is written in a certain rhythm and contains in the authorized version many incorrect renderings, we give a corrected metrical translation.

"And the Word of Jehovah came unto me, saying, And thou Son of Man, thus saith Jehovah unto the land of Israel:

An end cometh! The end
Upon the four corners of the land.
Now cometh the end upon thee
And I will send mine anger upon thee,
And I will judge thee according to thy ways;
And I will bring upon thee all thine abominations.
And mine eyes shall not spare thee,
Neither will I have pity:
Because I will bring thy ways upon thee
And thine abominations shall be in the midst of thee:
And ye shall know that I am Jehovah.

Thus saith the Lord Jehovah!
An evil—an only evil!—behold it cometh.*
An end is come—the end is come!
It awaketh against thee. Behold it cometh!
O inhabitant of the land, thy doom is come unto thee
The set time is come, the day is near,
The day of tumult.
And not the joyous shouting upon the mountains;
Now will I soon pour out my fury upon thee
And accomplish mine anger against thee.
I will judge thee according to thy ways,
And will bring upon thee all thine abominations.
Mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity.
According to thy ways will I render unto thee,
And thine abominations shall be in the midst of thee,
And ye shall know that I am Jehovah, who smiteth
(chapter vii:1-9).

This is the first section of this great and solemn portion of Ezekiel's prophecy. The end is announced to come upon the

*Another rendering is: "Calamity after calamity!"

entire land. The set time for judgment had come, it could no longer be averted. How merciful had been Jehovah's dealing with His beloved people. "But He, being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity, and destroyed them not; yea many a time turned He His anger away, and did not stir up all His wrath" (Psa. lxxviii:38). But now the measure of their wickedness had come. The day of reckoning was at hand. Divine fury was to sweep now over the entire land. His eyes would no longer spare nor would He pity them any longer.

There is another day coming in which the Lord will deal in fearful judgments with this earth. Now is the day of salvation in which God speaks in love through His Son. When wickedness and apostasy has reached its climax, the day of salvation will end and "the day of vengeance of our God" will begin. Then He will speak in His wrath and vex them in His sore displeasure (Psa. ii:5). Then will they say to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of His wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?" (Rev. vi:16-17). God's judgments for the future are as sure as were His judgments in the past. There is a set time, the day of the Lord, when He, to whom the Father has given all judgments, will tread "the winepress of the fierceness of the wrath of God, the Almighty" (Rev. xix:15).

Behold the Day! Behold it cometh!
Thy doom advanceth:
The rod hath blossomed, pride hath budded.
Violence has risen up into a rod of wickedness;
None of them shall remain; yea none of their multitude,
Nor their wealth; neither shall there be eminency among them.
The time is come, the day draweth near;
Let not the buyer rejoice, nor the seller mourn,
For wrath is upon all the multitude thereof.

For the seller shall not return to that which is sold,
Even though he were yet amongst the living.
In the vision touching the whole multitude thereof
It shall not be revoked;
And none shall through his iniquity assure his life.
They have blown the trumpet and made all ready,
But none goeth to the battle;
For my wrath is upon all the multitude thereof.
The sword is without; the pestilence and the famine within;
He that is in the field shall die by the sword;
And he that is in the city, famine and pestilence shall devour him.
But they that escape of them shall escape,
And be as the mountains like moaning doves,
All of them mourning, every one for his iniquity.
All hands shall be feeble, and every knee shall fail like water.
They shall gird themselves with sackcloth,
And horror shall cover them;
Shame shall be upon all faces, baldness upon all heads
(verses 10-18).

What a solemn description of the doom which was now to fall upon Jerusalem, the land and its inhabitants! The buyer and the seller as well as all the multitude were to be affected by it. The decree of judgment which had gone forth could not be revoked. The blowing of the trumpet, which is mentioned has generally been misunderstood by expositors. It is said to picture "the collapse of Judah's military preparations in the hour of danger, that when the siege of Jerusalem came, none responded." The blowing of the trumpets among Israel had a special significance. It carried with it the assurance that Jehovah heard and would be ready to fight for His people against their enemies. But as they knew their iniquities had separated them from God, His face being against them, none did go to the battle, for His wrath rested upon them all. Sword, pestilence and famine would devour them all and the few fugitives would be upon the mountains mourning over their iniquities. The rod mentioned which hath blossomed means Nebuchad-

nezzar, who executed this great judgment upon Jerusalem. The climax of the judgment prophecy is reached in the third part of the chapter.

They shall cast their silver in the streets,
And their gold shall be as an unclean thing;
Their silver and their gold shall not be able to deliver them
In the day of Jehovah's wrath;
They cannot satisfy their souls, neither fill their bowls,
Because it was the stumbling block of their iniquity.
And the beauty of their ornaments, they turned it to pride,
And the images of their abominations, their destestable things made they of it.
And I shall give it to the hands of strangers for a prey,
And to the wicked of the earth for a spoil; and they shall profane it.
For I will turn my face from them,
And they shall defile my secret place,
And robbers shall enter into it and profane it.
Form a chain,
For the land is full of bloody crimes,
And the city full of violence.
Therefore will I bring the worst of the nations,
And they shall possess their houses;
And I will make the pride of the mighty to cease,
And their sanctuaries shall be defiled.
Destruction cometh!
They shall seek peace, but there shall be none.
Calamity after calamity shall appear;
And rumour shall be upon rumour;
Then shall they seek a vision from a prophet;
But the law shall perish from the priest,
And counsel from the elders.
The king shall mourn, and the prince shall be clothed with dismay,
And the hands of the people of the land shall tremble:
I will do unto them according to their way,
When I shall judge them according to their deserts;
And they shall know that I am the Lord (verses 19-27).

Here we learn first of all that the stumbling block of their iniquity (verse 19) was the silver and gold. Prophets like

Isaiah, Amos and others bear witness to the fact that Jerusalem and the land enjoyed great prosperity and indulged in extravagant living before the judgment overtook the nation. Said Isaiah, "Their land also is full of silver and gold, neither is there an end of their treasures." In the third chapter of Isaiah the luxurious dress of the daughters of Zion is vividly described, while Amos also gives the scenes of their riotous, wanton living and emphasizes the oppression of the poor. Riches had increased and the prosperous conditions of the land produced vanity; they forgot Jehovah and worshipped the idols of the Gentiles. And now as the day of wrath breaks, their eyes would be opened and they were to find out the absolute worthlessness of their silver and gold. They would cast it into the streets, for it was unable to deliver them. Zephaniah, in his great vision of the national calamity which was to fall upon the people, gives a similar testimony. "Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of the Lord's wrath; but the whole land shall be devoured by the fire of His jealousy; for He shall make even a speedy riddance of all them that dwell in the land" (Zeph. i:18).

The Holy Spirit bears witness in the New Testament that similar conditions will exist in Christendom during the end of the present age. "Men shall be lovers of their own-selves, lovers of money (covetous) and lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God" (2 Tim. iii:1-5). The conditions of worldliness, apostasy, prosperity and luxurious living which prevailed in Jerusalem before the hand of God stripped the people and the land characterize our times. This will go on, and will culminate after the Lord has taken His true church into glory. In view of the visible coming of the Lord to deal with the earth in judgment the Spirit of God through James addresses especially the rich men. "Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries

that shall come upon you. . . . Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days" (James v:1-3).

The message of Ezekiel also announced that the Gentiles, the strangers, were to come and defile the temple. The chain mentioned refers to their condition as captives. Destruction was to come. There should be no peace; calamity was to follow calamity; according to what they had done a righteous God would deal with them. And thus it came to pass when Jerusalem fell and the people were taken away as captives.

VISIONS CONCERNING JERUSALEM.

Chapter viii.

With this chapter begins a new section. It contains a series of visions. The Prophet is shown first of all the awful abominations which were going on in the temple (chapter viii). Then the fact was made known to him that destruction would overtake all who were left in Jerusalem, except the sighing, faithful remnant, marked by the man with the inkhorn (chapter xi). This is followed by the vision of the coals of fire and the vision of glory (chapter x). The final vision in this section is the vision concerning the leaders of the people and the departure of the glory of the Lord (chapter xi).

These visions, which concern Jerusalem's history and condition in the days of Ezekiel, also foreshadow Jerusalem's future. There is a remarkable correspondence with events revealed in the last book of the Bible, the Book of Revelation. Another temple will be defiled by the abomination of the Anti-Christ during the coming great tribulation. Ezekiel saw an image of jealously, which provoketh to jealousy. There will be another image in Jerusalem on account of which judgment will come upon the unbelieving Jews (Rev. xiii:14-15). Then there will be a remnant sealed

and preserved (Rev. vii) as it was in the time of Ezekiel. Coals of fire Ezekiel saw scattered over the city; it denoted an act of judgment. When the last chapter of Jerusalem's final trouble passeth into history, fire from the altar will be cast upon the earth (Rev. viii:5). But while Ezekiel saw the glory departing after these judgments, the glory will return to the city and to Israel's land, when the great tribulation is ended. Ezekiel's vision of abominations among Israel is first given.

I. The Vision of the Image of Jealousy.

> And it came to pass in the sixth year, in the sixth month, in the fifth of the month, as I sat in mine house, and the elders of Judah sat before me, that the hand of the Lord God fell there upon me. Then I beheld, and lo a likeness as the appearance of fire: from the appearance of his loins, even downward; fire and from his loins even upward, as the appearance of brightness, as the look of glowing brass. And he put forth the form of an hand, and took me by a lock of mine head; and the spirit lifted me up between the earth and the heaven, and brought me in the visions of God to Jerusalem, to the door of the inner gate that looketh toward the north; where was the seat of the image of jealousy, which provoketh to jealousy. And, behold the glory of the God of Israel was there, according to the vision that I saw in the plain. Then said he unto me, Son of man, lift up thine eyes now the way toward the north. So I lifted up mine eyes the way toward the north, and behold northward at the gate of the altar this image of jealousy in the entry. He said furthermore unto me, Son of man, seest thou what they do? even the great abominations that the house of Israel committeth here, and I should go far off from my sanctuary? but turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see greater abominations (verses 1-6).

It was over a year after his first vision (i:1) when Ezekiel sat in his house surrounded by the elders of Judah. Perhaps they had come expecting some new communication from the prophet. Suddenly the hand of the Lord fell again upon him. He beheld once more the glorious likeness of

Him who was the center of the first vision of glory.* The hand of the Lord took the prophet by a lock of hair and the Spirit lifted him between the earth and the heaven and he was brought in the visions of God to Jerusalem. Was this a real experience? Critics speak of a trance, that the prophet was some kind of a psychic with the gift of clairvoyancy. It was not a trance-vision, but an action by the Spirit and power of the Lord. Elijah must have had frequently the same experience, for Obadiah said to him: "And it shall come to pass, as soon as I am gone from thee, that the Spirit of the Lord shall carry thee whither I know not" (1 Kings xviii:12). And the sons of the prophets said to Elisha after Elijah departed: "The Spirit of the Lord hath taken him up, and cast him upon some mountain, or into some valley" (2 Kings ii:16). The Spirit of the Lord also caught away Philip (Acts viii:39).

In the visions of God Ezekiel is brought to the door of the inner gate that looketh to the north. Here was the image of jealousy, which provoketh to jealousy. Some have taken this and the following visions to be retrospective. It has been said, "It was as if he were translated back to Jerusalem, and to the time when these things were occurring." Such is the view of some critics; however, it is untenable. These visions would lose their meaning if the prophet only seemed to be translated back to Jerusalem and to the time when these abominations had happened in Israel's past history. Later we find the names of persons given, whom he saw. They certainly were living persons known to

*The word "fire" is in the Septuagint (ancient Greek Version of the Old Testament) translated "man" so that it reads "the appearance of a man." There is a similarity between the Hebrew words for "man" and "fire." Fire is "esh" and man "ish." Compare with chapter i:26, 27.

Ezekiel and his contemporaries. One of them died while Ezekiel prophesied (xi:13).

What was the image of jealousy which provoketh to jealousy? It was an idol. The word is used in Deut. iv:-16, where it is translated "graven image." It is also found in 2 Chronicles xxxiii:7, 15, where it refers to the idol, which Manasseh had made and put up in the temple.

After Manasseh's idolatry came Josiah's great reformation. After his death Judah plunged into greater wickedness under the reign of wicked kings and a revival of idolatry followed once more. Such a wrath provoking idol was beheld by the prophet. This image they worshipped. "Son of man, seest thou what they do?" They must have lain prostrate before that idol. And yet the glory of the God of Israel was still there. He had not yet abandoned the place. Idolatry will once more be practiced in Jerusalem. Our Lord speaks of it prophetically in Matthew xii:43-45. The unclean spirit is idolatry. The Jewish people are now purged from it. At some future time that spirit will return with seven others. "And the last state of that man is worse than the first." Then our Lord applied the parable: "Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation" (literally: race). During the reign of the final Anti-Christ, idolatry in its worst form will be instituted once more in Jerusalem (2 Thess. ii:3-4; Rev. xiii:11-18).

II. The Worship of Creeping and Abominable Beasts.

And he brought me to the door of the court; and when I looked, behold, a hole in the wall. Then said he unto me, Son of man, dig now in the wall: and when I had digged in the wall, behold, a door. And he said unto me, Go in, and behold the wicked abominations that they do here. So I went in and saw; and, behold, every form of creeping things, and abominable beasts, and all the idols of the house of Israel, portrayed upon the wall round about. And there stood before them seventy men of the ancients of the house of Israel,

and in the midst of them stood Jaazaniah the son of Shaphan, with every man his censer in his hand; and a thick cloud of incense went up. Then said he unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen what the ancients of the house of Israel do in the dark, every man in the chambers of his imagery? for they say, The Lord seeth us not; the Lord hath forsaken the earth (verses 7-12).

The prophet saw next a hole in the wall, and being commanded to dig into it he found a secret door through which he entered. In the chamber, upon the wall round about, were pictured creeping things and abominable things. A worship of these creeping things and beasts was in progress, for the seventy ancients of Israel were swinging censers full of incense, so that a thick cloud went up. They were practising idolatry after the order of Egypt and of the most degrading kind. The people of God had sunk as deep, yea deeper, than the heathen round about them (Romans i:23). And the leaders of the nation, the seventy elders, were there leading in this worship of abominations. Jaazaniah, the son of Shaphan, is especially mentioned. Shaphan was the scribe, who received from the high-priest, Hilkiah, the book of the law, and who read it before King Josiah (2 Kings xxii:8-11; Jere. xxxix:14). The son of this illustrious and God-fearing scribe was the leader among the animal-worshippers. It was an evidence of the great apostasy which had engulfed the nation. And these idol-worshippers, each in his chamber of imagery (probably individual cells) said: "The Lord seeth us not; the Lord hath forsaken the earth." They denied His omniscience and omnipresence. The apostasy in Christendom is going the same road.

III. The Women Weeping for Tammuz.

He said also unto me, Turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see greater abominations that they do. Then he brought me to the door of the gate of the Lord's house which was toward the north;

and, behold, there sat women weeping for Tammuz. Then said he unto me, Hast thou seen this, O son of man? Turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see greater abominations than these (verses 13-15).

Tammuz, the Babylonian "Dumuzi," was the god of spring vegetation, who dies, going down to Hades, and revives again with each returning summer. The worship of this god became identified with Phoenicia, and from there this wicked cult came to Greece, where Tammuz was known under the name of Adonis. The weeping woman celebrated the death of the god, an emblem of the decay of earth's productive powers. With it were connected some of the vilest, immoral ceremonies and licentious habits. Thus we see how false worship and immorality are closely, yea, inseparably, linked together. In our days the increase of licentiousness is but the result of having rejected the Truth of God.

IV. The Greatest of all Abominations: Sun-Worship.

And he brought me into the inner court of the Lord's house; and, behold at the door of the temple of the Lord, between the porch and the altar, were about five and twenty men, with their backs toward the temple of the Lord, and their faces toward the east; and they worshipped the sun toward the east. Then he said unto me, Hast thou seen this, O son of man? Is it a light thing to the house of Judah that they commit the abominations which they commit here? for they have filled the land with violence, and have returned to provoke me to anger: and, lo, they put the branch to their nose. Therefore, will I also deal in fury; mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity; and though they cry in mine ears with a loud voice, yet will I not hear them (verses 16-18).

The twenty-five men, who stood between the porch and the altar with their backs to the house of the Lord and their faces towards the sun, worshipping the sun, were the twenty-four priests, who constituted the appointed courses. Their attitude was one of defiance. They practiced the abominable cult, openly showing by the turned backs

against the temple that they had wilfully rejected Jehovah and His worship. What else was connected with sun-worship? One mysterious sentence appears at the close of verse 17. "And, lo, they put the branch to their nose." This phrase is very obscure. Jewish commentators claim that the words conceal some shocking and wicked rite; and this may be the correct meaning. Sun-worship and its attending lusts of the flesh are not unknown in our own times. A few months ago a great sun-festival was held in Paris.* Thousands participated in it. Hymns to the sun were sung and sun-dances held, while the nights were given over to all kinds of immoralities. Bahaism, whose deceitful leader is a sun-worshipper, has hundreds of thousands of followers in the English speaking world. They turned their ears from the Truth and have been turned to fables.

Elders, women and priests had turned from Jehovah and His worship. And now Jehovah speaks and pronounces judgment upon them. "Therefore will I also deal in fury; mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity; and though they cry in mine ears with a loud voice, yet will I not hear them." Jehovah did according to His word. He did not spare; there was no pity. Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed and the people had to feel Jehovah's fury. And judgment greater than Jerusalem's will surely overtake this present evil age with its idolatries, its abominations, its rejection of God's Gospel and defiance of God.

*This was three months before the war.

THE VISION OF THE MAN WITH THE INKHORN.

Chapter ix.

The vision which follows is closely connected with the previous visions in which Ezekiel had seen the worship of idols, and of beasts, and of the sun. Divine judgment must follow. It is a judgment vision the Prophet now beholds. The judgment, however, is of a discriminating character. The messengers are commissioned to mark the sorrowing, faithful remnant. For the rest of the sinners in Jerusalem there is no mercy. They had defiled the temple and now the temple was to be defiled by their slain bodies.

I. The Judgment Command Given.

He cried also in mine ears with a loud voice, saying, Cause them that have charge over the city to draw near, even every man with his destroying weapon in his hand. And, behold, six men came from the way of the higher gate, which lieth toward the north, and every man a slaughter weapon in his hand; and one man among them was clothed with linen, with a writer's inkhorn by his side: and they went in, and stood beside the brazen altar. And the glory of the God of Israel was gone up from the cherub, whereupon he was, to the threshold of the house. And he called to the man clothed with linen, which had the writer's inkhorn by his side; and the Lord said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof. And to the others he said in mine hearing, Go ye after him through the city, and smite: let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity. Slay utterly old and young, both maids, and little children, and women: but come not near any man upon whom is the mark; and begin at my sanctuary (verses 1-6).

Who are they who are called to execute the judgment? Six men came from the way of the higher gate, one of them clothed in linen had a writer's inkhorn by his side, while the others had slaughter weapons in their hands. They

were not human beings but angels. The city was given over into their hands. Angels were therefore used in God's judgments of the past. They will be used in the coming judgments. "The Son of Man shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather out of His Kingdom all things that offend and them which do iniquity" (Matt. xiii:41). "For the Son of Man shall come in the glory of His Father with His angels" (Matt. xvi:27). "When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thess. i:7-8). Throughout the book of Revelation angels are seen carrying out the judgments of God. Especially are we reminded here of the seventh chapter of the last book of the Bible. Four angels are seen there holding the four winds of the earth. Then there appeared a fifth angel having the seal of the living God. He cried with a loud voice to the four angels: "Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads" (Rev. vii:1-3). One hundred and forty-four thousand were then sealed. The sealed ones in Revelation with the mark on the forehead constitute the faithful remnant of Israel who witness during the tribulation. Those who die the martyr's death will have part in the first resurrection, because they did not worship the beast nor received his mark on their foreheads (Rev. xx:4). Those who will be kept through the tribulation will be the nucleus of the Kingdom on earth. We notice a striking correspondency with this vision of Ezekiel. Judgment is to fall upon all the apostates in Jerusalem, but the men that sigh and cry on account of the abominations were to be marked by the angel with the inkhorn and escape the impending judgment. Their sighing and weeping was the evidence that they did not share the abominations of idolatry but were

true to Jehovah and His worship. And may we not forget that now in Christendom, in the midst of the dark days of apostasy and the soon coming tribulation and judgment, there is a faithful remnant, who sigh and cry and to whom the Lord has given a special promise: "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of trial, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell on the earth" (Rom. iii:10).

The word "mark" in the Hebrew is "Tav," the last letter in the Hebrew alphabet. Its literal meaning is "cross." This letter "T" was a cross in the older Hebrew script as well as in the Phoenician and Samaritan. The Egyptians also used a cross in their language; with them it was a sign of life. Ancient Jewish tradition gives the information that the blood sprinkled in Egypt on the doorpost (Exodus xii:23) was in the form of a cross. All this is interesting. To this we may add that in Genesis iv:15, the mark set upon Cain, an entirely different word is used.

"Begin at my Sanctuary" was the command. There the responsibility rested and there the judgment had to begin. 1 Peter iv:17 may here be considered. "For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God; and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the Gospel of God."

II. The Command Executed.

Then they began at the ancient men which were before the house. And he said unto them, Defile the house, and fill the courts with the slain: go ye forth. And they went forth, and slew in the city. And it came to pass, while they were slaying them, and I was left, that I fell upon my face, and cried, and said, Ah, Lord God! wilt thou destroy all the residue of Israel in thy pouring out of thy fury upon Jerusalem? Then said he unto me, The iniquity of the house of Israel and Judah is exceeding great, and the land is full of blood, and the city full of perverseness: for they say, The Lord hath forsaken the earth, and the Lord seeth not. And as for me also,

mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity, but I will recompense their way upon their head. And, behold, the man clothed with linen, which had the inkhorn by his side, reported the matter, saying, I have done as thou hast commanded me (verses 7-11).

The command is literally carried out. God's judgments are always carried out to the letter; there is no such thing as a "spiritual" fulfillment of a judgment of God. The world some day will find out the solemn truth of this fact. The temple where they had practised all the vileness of idolatry, where they worshipped creeping things, is now defiled by their dead bodies. To touch a dead body anywhere meant defilement for seven days (Num. xix:11), but now the very place which they considered holy is made a defiled place. The Priest-Prophet is shocked. He fell on his face and a cry of horror escaped his lips. "Ah, Lord God! wilt Thou destroy all the residue of Israel in Thy pouring out of Thy fury upon Jerusalem?" Was it not contrary to God's holiness to defile the place dedicated to Himself? And would He not show mercy and destroy the residue of His people? The despairing cry is answered at once. The iniquity of the house of Israel and the house of Judah was filled up. God could no longer pity nor spare. This is but a repetition of what Jehovah had announced before. (See chapter v:11; vii:4; viii:18.)

"And behold the man clothed in linen, which had the inkhorn by his side, reported the matter, saying, I have done as Thou hast commanded me."

THE VISION OF THE COALS OF FIRE AND THE VISION OF THE DEPARTING GLORY.

Chapter x.

After the Prophet had seen the marking of the faithful ones in the doomed city, two other visions follow. They also relate to the impending judgment of the doomed city. The first vision indicates the fire by which the city would be consumed, and the second, another vision of the glory, shows how that glory was gradually departing from Jerusalem. The complete departure is recorded in the eleventh chapter.

I. The Vision of the Coals of Fire.

Then I looked, and, behold, in the firmament of the cherubim there appeared over them as it were a sapphire stone, as the appearance of the likeness of a throne. And he spake unto the man clothed with linen, and said, Go in between the wheels, even the under cherub, and fill thine hand with coals of fire from between the cherubim, and scatter them over the city. And he went in my sight. Now the cherubim stood on the right side of the house, when the man went in; and the cloud filled the inner court. Then the glory of the Lord went up from the cherub, and stood over the threshold of the house; and the house was filled with the cloud, and the court was full of the brightness of the Lord's glory. And the sound of the cherubims' wings was heard even to the outer court, as the voice of the Almighty God when he speaketh. And it came to pass, that when he had commanded the man clothed with linen, saying, Take fire from between the wheels, from between the cherubims; then he went in, and stood beside the wheels. And one cherub stretched forth his hand from between the cherubim unto the fire that was between the cherubim, and took thereof, and put it into the hands of him that was clothed with linen; who took it, and went out (verses 1-7).

Once more the Prophet beholds in the firmament above the chreubim the likeness of a throne. It is the throne of the Lord. However, the occupant of the throne is not seen;

His voice only is heard. The man clothed with linen is commanded to go in between the wheels, under the cherub, to fill his hands with coals of fire and then to scatter them over the city. Who is this man clothed in linen? He appeared for the first time in the preceding chapter. With the inkhorn at his side, he set the mark upon the foreheads of the faithful ones. Here we see him again executing the judgment upon Jerusalem. Judgment is given into his hands. That he is a supernatural being is clear. And he is more than an angel. He held the place of pre-eminence among the other angels (chapter ix:2-4). This angel is the Angel of the Lord, the same who appeared to the Patriarchs, to Moses, Joshua, Gideon, Manoah and to others. It is the Son of God in the garb of an angel. In the same form he also appeared to Daniel on the banks of the river Hiddekel. "Then I lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and behold a certain man clothed in linen, whose loins were girded with fine gold of Uphaz. His body also was like the beryl, and his face as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as lamps of fire, and his arms and his feet like in color to polished brass, and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude" (Dan. x:5-6). Here we have a complete description of the same person whom Ezekiel saw taking the coals of fire and scattering them over Jerusalem. Judgment upon the guilty city came from his hands.

When we turn to the Book of Revelation, we find a similar scene which has not yet been enacted. "And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given to him much incense that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand. And the Angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast it into the

earth; and there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings and an earthquake" (Rev. viii:3-5). This angel who presents the prayers before the throne and who casts the judgment fire into the earth is the One who received from God's hands the seven sealed book (Rev. v:1), the Lamb of God, the Lion of the tribe of Judah. This Angel-Priest, into whose hands also judgment is committed, is the Son of God. John saw Him dealing in judgment with the earth, a judgment which has not yet come, and Ezekiel beheld Him as the executor of the judgment upon Jerusalem, which was carried out through Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon.

Ezekiel saw the man clothed in linen enter in between the wheels. As he went in the cherubim, these majestic creatures of God, stood at the right side of the house, while the cloud filled the inner court. This cloud is the visible sign of Jehovah's presence (Exod. xix:9; xxiv:15-18; Numbers ix:19; xii:10; 1 Kings viii:10). Then the glory of the Lord went up; the withdrawing from the city began. It stood over the threshold of the house which was filled with the cloud and the whole court was full of the brightness of the Lord's glory. From the hand of the cherub, the man in linen cloth received the fire that was between the cherubim. And he took it and went out.

II. The Vision of the Departing Glory.

And there appeared in the cherubim the form of a man's hand under their wings. And when I looked, behold the four wheels by the cherubim, one wheel by one cherub, and another wheel by another cherub: and the appearance of the wheels was as the color of a chrysolite stone. And as for their appearances, they four had one likeness, as if a wheel had been in the midst of a wheel. When they went, they went upon their four sides; they turned not as they went, but to the place whither the head looked they followed it; they turned not as they went. And their whole body, and their backs and their hands and their wings and the wheels,

were full of eyes round about, even the wheels that the four had. As for the wheels, it was cried unto them in my hearing, O wheel. And every one had four faces: the first face was the face of a cherub, and the second face was the face of a man, and the third the face of a lion, and the fourth the face of an eagle. And the cherubim were lifted up. This is the living creature that I saw by the river of Chebar. And when the cherubim went, the wheels went by them: and when the cherubim lifted up their wings to mount up from the earth, the same wheels also turned not from beside them. When they stood, these stood; and when they were lifted up, these lifted up themselves also: for the spirit of the living creature was in them. Then the glory of the Lord departed from off the threshold of the house, and stood over the cherubim. And the cherubim lifted up their wings, and mounted up from the earth in my sight: when they went out, the wheels also were beside them, and every one stood at the door of the east gate of the Lord's house; and the glory of the God of Israel was over them above. This is the living creature that I saw under the God of Israel by the river of Chebar; and I knew that they were the cherubim. Every one had four faces a piece, and every one four wings; and the likeness of the hands of a man was under their wings. And the likeness of their faces was the same faces which I saw by the river of Chebar, their appearances and themselves; they went every one straight forward (verses 8-22).

One would naturally expect after the man clothed in linen had taken the coals of fire and gone out to scatter them over Jerusalem, that the next vision the Prophet had, would be the burning of the city itself. Instead of receiving a vision of the judgment work he beholds once more the glory of the Lord. The similarity with the great vision in the first chapter needs hardly to be pointed out. However, the order of the description differs from that of the opening vision of this book. Critics have seen in this fact the evidence of some other writer who interpolated the repetition of the vision of the glory of the Lord. But if such were the case the person who did it would have not dared to make these changes. The differences in the vision demonstrates

that Ezekiel is the writer and not some other person. He beheld the same vision as in the beginning by the river Chebar only from another viewpoint. Wheels and cherubim are seen first ready for the departure from the city. The eyes are made more prominent than in the first vision. "Full of eyes" we read in chapter i:18. Here in this vision eyes are everywhere. "And their whole body, and their backs, and their hands, and their wings, and the wheels, were full of eyes round about, even the wheels that the four had." This symbolizes the omniscience of God. After the description of the cherubim and the wheels, the solemn command is given for the start. Verse 13 may be rendered: "In my hearing, unto the wheels, even unto them, it was proclaimed: Whirl wheels." Once more the prophet beholds the faces of the cherubim. And here is a striking change. In the opening vision Ezekiel saw their faces in the following order: The face of a man; the face of a lion; these were on the right side. The four had the face of an ox on the left side; these four also had the face of an eagle (chapter i:10). But now Ezekiel sees the face of the cherub first of all, then the face of a man, a lion and an eagle. The cherubim were beheld by the prophet from a different angle and the face of the cherub* appears as identified with that of the ox. That the vision did not differ at all from the first great vision Ezekiel expressly affirms at the close. "And the likeness of their faces was the same faces which I saw by the river Chebar, their appearances and themselves: They went every one straight forward" (verse 22).

Then when the command had been given, "Whirl wheels!" everything is set in motion. The cherubim went, the

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*The cherub who handed to the man clothed in linen the fire from between the cherubim.

wheels went beside them. The mighty wings of the cherubim were lifted up to mount up from the earth; the wheels never swerved from their side. When the cherubim stood, the wheels stood. The energizing Spirit was in all. The Glory of the Lord departed from the threshold of the temple; over its portals "Ichabod" (the glory is departed) was now to be written. Then in Ezekiel's sight the cherubim mounted up from the earth. They halted at the door of the east gate of the Temple. Above it was the Glory of the Lord. Thus, gradually, in solemn majesty, the Glory of the Lord, which had dwelt visibly in the Temple in the midst of His people, was departing. Verse 22 of chapter xi connects with verse 19 of chapter x. The complete departute of the Glory of the Lord from the midst of the city we find recorded there. Here in our chapter the cherubim with the Glory of the Lord above them stood at the east gate of the Lord's house. From there its final departure took place. But the visions Ezekiel had seen were beheld once more in his great vision of that temple which will yet be erected in Jerusalem. That departed glory will then return. "And the Glory of the Lord came into the house by the way of the gate whose front was toward the east" (chapter xliii:4). It will return in the same way as it departed. And that will be when the King, our Lord, comes back to earth again. Then the Glory will cover Israel and Jerusalem (Isa. iv:5; lx:1) and the knowledge of it covers the earth as the waters the deep.

CONCERNING THE LEADERS. PROMISE OF RESTORATION. THE GLORY DEPARTS.

Chapter xi.

This chapter concludes the visions concerning the doom of Jerusalem. At the close of the previous chapter we saw the Glory of the Lord getting ready to leave the doomed city. The complete withdrawal is recorded now. However, before we reach this we find a prophecy uttered against the leaders of the people. Then the Prophet received a comforting message about the future restoration and blessing of the nation. This is the first restoration promise in this book. It is repeated and enlarged in the great predictions after the fall of Jerusalem.

I. The Prophecy against the Leaders.

Moreover the spirit lifted me up, and brought me unto the east gate of the Lord's house, which looketh eastward: and behold at the door of the gate five and twenty men; among whom I saw Jaazaniah, the son of Azur, and Pelatiah the son of Benaiah, princes of the people. Then said he unto me, Son of man, these are the men that devise mischief, and give wicked counsel in this city; which say, It is not near; let us build houses; this city is the cauldron, and we be the flesh.

Therefore prophesy against them, prophesy, O son of man. And the Spirit of the Lord fell upon men, and said unto me, Speak; Thus saith the Lord, Thus have ye said, O house of Israel: for I know the things that come into your mind, every one of them. Ye have multiplied your slain in this city, and ye have filled the streets thereof with the slain. Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Your slain, whom ye have laid in the midst of it, they are the flesh, and this city is the cauldron: but I will bring you forth out of the midst of it. Ye have feared the sword; and I will bring a sword upon you, saith the Lord God. And I will bring you out of the midst thereof, and deliver you into the hands of strangers, and will execute judgments among you. Ye shall fall by the sword: I will judge you in the border of Israel; and ye shall know that I am the Lord. This city shall not be your cauldron, neither shall

ye be the flesh in the midst thereof; but I will judge you in the border of Israel. And ye shall know that I am the Lord: for ye have not walked in my statutes, neither executed my judgments, but have done after the manners of the heathen that are round about you.

And it came to pass, when I prophesied, that Pelatiah the son of Benaiah died. Then fell I down upon my face, and cried with a loud voice, and said, Ah, Lord God! wilt thou make a full end of the remnant of Israel? (verses 1-13).

The prophet had watched the movements of the cherubim and the glory of the Lord, and now he is again suddenly transported to the east gate of the Lord's house. At the door of the gate he beholds twenty-five men. He recognized among them Jaazaniah the son of Azur, and Pelatiah the son of Benaiah, princes of the people. In the eighth chapter he had also seen, between the porch and the altar, twenty-five men with their backs towards the temple (viii:16). In that chapter Jaazaniah is mentioned. The question then arises, is this the same company Ezekiel sees once more and against which he utters his denunciatory message? They cannot be identical with the men in the previous chapter, for they belonged evidently to the priestly class, while the twenty-five men in this chapter are leaders, or princes, of the people. Nor is the Jaazaniah the same as in the eighth chapter. Here is a Jaazaniah who was the son of Azur, while the other Jaazaniah was the son of Shaphan. These princes here may be the same of whom we read in Jeremiah xxxviii:4.

It shows the complete corruption of Jerusalem. The priesthood and the leaders of the nation were steeped in wickedness and defied God and the judgment He had announced through Jeremiah, and now also through Ezekiel. Interesting are the names of those mentioned, Jaazaniah ("He will be heard of the Lord"); Azur ("Helper"); Pelatiah ("Delivered of the Lord"); Benaiah ("Built up of the

Lord"). Their names indicate that they knew the Lord and His truth and yet they had turned deliberately from Him and from His Word. They devised mischief (or iniquity) and gave wicked counsel. Their wicked counsel consisted in disobedience against Jehovah and His Word. In regard to the judgment they said, "It is not the time to build houses; this is the cauldron and we are the flesh." They know of Jeremiah's letter which he had sent to the elders which were carried away captives. In that letter, Jeremiah, believing God's Word concerning the long duration of the captivity, gave the advice, "Build ye houses and dwell in them" (Jere. xxix). They ridiculed that divinely given advice. They still thought themselves safe in Jerusalem. The phrase "this is the cauldron" means the city of Jerusalem; and we are the "flesh" themselves. As the flesh in the cauldron is preserved from the fire by the cauldron itself, so they felt themselves secure in the doomed city. That these wicked leaders were still in the city shows that the judgment in chapter ix was not a complete judgment. It began at the sanctuary, and the wicked worshippers Ezekiel saw in his vision were smitten first of all, while the man with the inkhorn marked the entire remnant for preservation. Then the Spirit fell upon Ezekiel and he uttered Jehovah's message. Their proverb about the cauldron and the flesh is used to announce their own doom. Those whom they had slain were the flesh, not they the living ones; the slain ones had the city for a cauldron. But the defiant leaders, who cast the judgment predictions to the winds, would be brought forth out of the city, the place of their supposed security. They feared the sword and it would come upon them. Solemnly the Lord declared, "This city shall not be your cauldron, neither shall ye be the flesh in the midst thereof; I will judge you in the border of Israel." And thus it came true. Nebuchadnezzar received his prison-

ers on the borders, the territory of the kingdom of Israel, at Riblah (2 Kings xxv:18-21; Jer. lii:24-27).

All this finds a repetition in the present age. God has spoken. Long ago He has in His Word announced the judgment upon this present age. Men, religious men, leaders among the people, like these twenty-five, reject His Word and do not believe in the threatened judgments. "Peace and safety" is their false hope. But the day is coming and not far off when all who reject the Word of God will find out, to their eternal shame and loss, that His Word is true.

And while the Prophet delivered faithfully his message, the Lord touched one of the men; Pelatiah suddenly died. He may have stood there with sneering lips, defying the Lord's mouthpiece, when sudden death was meted out to him. It was a divine seal upon the words they had heard. This act of judgment greatly impressed the Prophet and he prayed for the preservation of the remnant of Israel. Knowing the sad condition of the people he loved so well, he feared that they all would be taken away. May we also, in the days of impending judgments make use of the prayer of intercession. The next paragraph contains the answer Ezekiel received.

II. The Message of Restoration and Blessing.

Again the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, thy brethren, even thy brethren, the man of thy kindred, and all the house of Israel, wholly, are they unto whom the inhabitants of Jerusalem have said, Get you far from the Lord: unto us is this land given in possession. Therefore say, Thus saith the Lord God: Although I have cast them far off among the heathen, and although I have scattered them among the countries, yet will I be to them as a little sanctuary in the countries where they shall come. Therefore say, Thus saith the Lord God; I will even gather you from the people, and assemble you out of the countries where ye have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel. And they shall come thither, and they shall take away all the detestable things

thereof and all the abominations thereof from thence. And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh: That they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God. But as for them whose heart walketh after the heart of their detestable things and their abominations, I will recompense their way upon their own heads, saith the Lord God (verses 14-21).

It is the first message of comfort Ezekiel received. They were to be scattered among the nations, yet Jehovah promises, "I will be to them a little* sanctuary in the countries where they shall come." This refers to the remnant who still clings to Him and hopes in the fulfilment of His promises. Then follows the great outlook into their future. Blessed promises! They are the hope of Israel. Their regathering, their return from exile is here definitely predicted by Ezekiel. Moses before had announced the same future restoration. So did Isaiah and Jeremiah as well as the earlier prophets. The denial of the literal regathering of Israel means the denial of the Word of the Lord. They will receive the land of Israel. But greater things are promised to the people. The stony heart is to be taken away; they are to receive a heart of flesh. This is the result of the new Spirit, His Spirit, which they will receive. It means the new birth of that nation to enter into the promised kingdom. Then the result will be an obedient people. "They shall be my people and I will be their God." Has this been fulfilled in the return of the feeble remnant from Babylon? Many believe that Ezekiel's message found then its accomplishment. It is not so. The nation was not put into possession of the great blessings which are everywhere linked with their literal restoration and possession of the land. Ezekiel's great

*Or, "for a little while."

visions of the national restoration of Israel and the greater spiritual blessings are still unfulfilled. They will be fulfilled when the Glory of the Lord, that is the Lord of Glory, their rejected King, the Son of David, the King of Israel, returns.

III. The Glory Departs.

> Then did the cherubim lift up their wings, and the wheels beside them; and the glory of the God of Israel was over them above. And the glory of the Lord went up from the midst of the city and stood upon the mountain which is on the east side of the city.
>
> Afterwards the Spirit took me up, and brought me in a vision by the Spirit of God into Chaldea, to them of the captivity. So the vision that I had seen went up from me. Then I spake unto them of the captivity all the things that the Lord had shewed me (verses 22-25).

After this comforting message of future blessing for the nation and restoration to the land, the Glory of the Lord holds its departure. We saw how it gradually withdrew from the temple, where it had dwelt. Now the complete departure from the city has come. But it is a blessed thought, before that takes place, Jehovah gave His Word that He would return and be again with His people. "The Glory of the Lord went up from the midst of the city and stood upon the mountain which is on the east side of the city." That mountain is the Mount of Olives. Significant place where the Shekinah, the Glory of the Lord with its cherubim and wheels was seen for the last time. Upon that mountain He stood, who is the Glory Himself, our Lord Jesus Christ. From there He went back to the Father. And in a coming day "His feet will stand upon the Mount of Olives." And when He comes back in visible glory, Israel and Jerusalem will behold the return of the Glory of the Lord, Ezekiel saw departing from temple and city. Then that will happen what has never been in Israel's past history: "All the earth will be filled with His Glory."

MESSAGES AND PARABLES.

Chapter xii.

A new section of this book begins with the twelfth chapter and ends with chapter xix. The judgments the Prophet had announced, the great visions he had seen, all showing the impending doom of Jerusalem, were not believed nor heeded by the people. This is announced by a direct communication from the Lord in the beginning of this chapter. After he had seen the departure of the Glory of the Lord, he spoke unto them of the captivity all the things that the Lord had shown unto him (xi:25). Perhaps some time elapsed before the Word of the Lord came unto him revealing the unbelieving, rebellious condition of the people. "Son of man, thou dwellest in the midst of a rebellious house, which have eyes to see, and see not; they have ears to hear, and hear not; for they are a rebellious house" (verse 2). Therefore the speedy judgment is again announced and the Prophet received a series of messages and parables. "The Word of the Lord came," and "Thus saith the Lord," are the oft-repeated phrases in this most interesting chapter. We shall find many solemn truths in this section, truths which have a meaning for our times as well. May we hear His voice in these words which the Prophet-Priest heard from Jehovah. The first chapter of this section has two parts.

I. The Symbolical Sign of the Certainty and Nearness of the Judgment.

The word of the Lord also came unto me, saying, Son of man, thou dwellest in the midst of a rebellious house, which have eyes to see, and see not; they have ears to hear, and hear not; for they are a rebellious house. Therefore, thou son of man, prepare thee stuff for removing, and remove by day in their sight; and thou shalt remove from thy place to another place in their sight: it may be they will consider, though they be a rebellious house. Then

shalt thou bring forth thy stuff by day in their sight, as stuff for removing; and thou shalt go forth at even in their sight, as they that go forth into captivity. Dig thou through the wall in their sight, and carry out thereby. In their sight shalt thou bear it upon thy shoulders, and carry it forth in the twilight: thou shalt cover thy face, that thou see not the ground: for I have set thee for a sign unto the house of Israel. And I did so as I was commanded; I brought forth my stuff by day, as stuff for captivity, and in the even I digged through the wall with mine hand; I brought it forth in the twilight, and I bare it upon my shoulder in their sight (verses 1-7).

In the commission which the Prophet received (chapter ii) the rebellious condition of the people had been declared by the Lord, and now once more the fact that they were "a rebellious house" is mentioned. They had eyes and did not see, ears and they did not hear. Moses had spoken of that (Deut. xxix:1-4) and their past history up to the days of Ezekiel only confirmed the truth of this statement. Isaiah had heard the same words from the Lord (Isa. vi:9-10) and Jeremiah had to repeat them in his great call to a backslidden people (Jere. v:21). Then our Lord used the same words when the nation had rejected His testimony (Matt. xiii:13-15; Mark viii:18; John xii:39-40). The last time we find them applied is in Acts xxviii:26-27. Blindness is now upon Israel, but the day is also coming when that judicial blindness will be removed and they will be no longer the rebellious house. Of this coming great miracle of the Grace of God Ezekiel's later prophecies have much to say.

Here the Prophet is told to act again in a symbolical sign. He was told to prepare stuff for removing. This meant that he should attire himself like one who goes on a journey with sandals on his feet, a staff in his hand, a burden upon his shoulders. Then he was to remove from one place to another. He was also to bring forth his stuff in their sight,

and then with the captive's burden upon his back he was commanded to dig through the wall and carry it through the hole. Furthermore he was to cover his face so that he did not see the ground. All this the prophet did in the sight of the people. In all this the Lord in His infinite patience, in making the Prophet a sign unto them, waited still for their repentance; "it may be they will consider, though they be a rebellious house."

We find the meaning of all this explained in the verses which follow:

> And in the morning came the word of the Lord unto me, saying, Son of man, hath not the house of Israel, the rebellious house, said unto thee, What doest thou? Say thou unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; This burden concerneth the prince in Jerusalem, and all the house of Israel that are among them. Say, I am your sign; like as I have done, so shall it be done unto them: they shall remove and go into captivity. And the prince that is among them shall bear upon his shoulder in the twilight, and shall go forth: they shall dig through the wall to carry out thereby: he shall cover his face, that he see not the ground with his eyes. My net also will I spread upon him, and he shall be taken in my snare: and I will bring him to Babylon to the land of the Chaldeans; yet shall he not see it, though he shall die there. And I will scatter toward every wind all that are about him to help him, and all his bands; and I will draw out the sword after them. And they shall know that I am the Lord, when I shall scatter them among the nations, and disperse them in the countries. But I will leave a few men of them from the sword, from the famine, and from the pestilence; that they may declare all their abominations among the heathen whither they come; and they shall know that I am the Lord (verses 8-16).

The actions of the Prophet were witnessed by the people and they said to him, What doest thou? The answer to their inquiry is given by the Lord Himself. We have therefore the divine interpretation of what Ezekiel had done in their presence. It is a prophecy and concerns mostly "the

prince in Jerusalem"; Zedekiah is meant. His attempt to flee from Jerusalem and his fate when the king of Babylon put out his eyes, his captivity in the land of the Chaldeans and death in that land are here clearly predicted. Jeremiah xxxix:4; lii:10-11 and 2 Kings xxv:1-7 must be read in connection with the sign of Ezekiel and the interpretation as given by the Lord. Thus Ezekiel had enacted a prophecy before their eyes which came literally true. Certain critics have tried to explain that what Ezekiel did must have happened after the fall of Jerusalem and the capture of Zedekiah. However, this attempt to disprove the passage as a real prophecy has failed. Others have tried to explain it in still another way. It has been said: "Since we know that the book was written after the event, it is a perfectly fair question whether in the interpretation of the symbols Ezekiel may not have read into it a fuller meaning than was present to his own mind at the time." This statement sets aside the fact that not Ezekiel gave the interpretation and read something into it, but the whole passage is the Word of the Lord, introduced with "Thus saith the Lord God." Predictions of any kind revealing future events seems to be the unpalatable thing for the destructive criticism, for it proves the fact of divine revelation. We have followed step by step the different judgment messages and visions which the Prophet received and delivered, how Jerusalem was facing its certain doom and now Zedekiah and his fate in trying to escape from Jerusalem is especially mentioned. All these visions are closely connected and were all given before the city fell.

And what the Lord predicted here, not alone about Zedekiah, but also about the people and their dispersion came true. They were scattered among the nations, but a full end of them was not made, a remnant was to be left and to declare their abominations among the nations.

Scattered in all countries they witness by their condition as a homeless nation to their own disobedience and shame.

> Moreover the word of the Lord came to me, saying, Son of man, eat thy bread with quaking, and drink thy water with trembling and with carefulness; And say unto the people of the land, Thus saith the Lord God of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and of the land of Israel; They shall eat their bread with carefulness, and drink their water with astonishment, that her land may be desolate from all that is therein because of the violence of all them that dwell therein. And the cities that are inhabited shall be laid waste, and the land shall be desolate; and ye shall know that I am the Lord (verses 17-20).

An additional message is given. Ezekiel was to eat his bread with quaking and drink his water with dread and anxious care. It was another sign of the affliction which was to come upon them. The land also should become desolate and the cities be laid waste. Thus the Lord continued to warn and plead with His people. Judgment is always his strange work (Isa. xxxiii:21). "For He doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men" (Lam. iii:33). The unheeded warnings were repeated over and over again by Ezekiel and the other prophets; He waited in His infinite patience for the return of His people and, as we learn from the Book of Judges, if there is but a cry from the heart of His people, He is ready to respond. But Israel heard not. They made light of all the predictions of the rapidly nearing judgment. When we think of our own times and generation, and remember the deliberate rejection of God's Word, the impenitence and worldliness prevalent in Christendom, and the judgments which are threatened and which must come some day, these opening messages of Ezekiel and their fulfilment in the judgment of Jerusalem and the nation take on an additional meaning. God must needs do His strange work, the work of judgment upon those who reject

the best He has given, the Gospel of His Grace. The condition of the people is now more fully seen in the second part of this chapter.

II. The False Hope. The Judgment not to be Delayed.

> And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying Son of man, what is that proverb that ye have in the land of Israel, saying, The days are prolonged, and every vision faileth? Tell them, therefore, Thus saith the Lord God; I will make this proverb to cease, and they shall no more use it as a proverb in Israel; but say unto them, The days are at hand, and the effect of every vision. For there shall be no more any vain vision nor flattering divination within the house of Israel. For I am the Lord: I will speak, and the word that I shall speak shall come to pass; it shall be no more prolonged: for in your days, O rebellious house, will I say the word, and will perform it, saith the Lord God.
>
> Again the word of the Lord came to me, saying, Son of man, behold, they of the house of Israel say, The vision that he seeth is for many days to come, and he prophesieth of the times that are far off. Therefore say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; There shall none of my words be prolonged any more, but the word which I have spoken shall be done, saith the Lord God (verses 21-28).

We must again remember in reading these words that in the midst of Israel false prophets deluded the people with their false messages. The rebellious spirit against the Lord was fostered by these men and the threatening judgments announced by Jeremiah and by Ezekiel were not believed by the mass of the people. Of them we read elsewhere: "Thy prophets have seen vain and foolish things for thee, and they have not discovered thine iniquity, to turn away thy captivity, but have seen for thee false burdens and causes of banishment" (Lam. ii:14). Believing the false messages the people said, "The days are prolonged, and every vision faileth." Had they really believed that the days were not to be prolonged and that the vision of judgment upon Jerusalem was about to be accomplished, they would

have surely turned to the Lord and cried to Him for mercy. Unbelief was responsible for their condition, and in that unbelief they were sustained by the lying prophets. In the next chapter the Prophet utters his God-given denunciation of these false prophets and prophetesses.

All this is present with us to-day. Blinded Israel then did not believe what the Lord had spoken. They thought themselves secure, that the days would be prolonged and that the visions had failed. It is so to-day. The Spirit of God has predicted this for the end of the present age: "Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation" (2 Peter iii:3-4). This is the spirit to-day which has permeated the larger part of the professing church. What God has said concerning the future, the Coming again of His Son to judge the world in righteousness is either ignored or rejected, while many even ridicule these great predictions. It is the popular opinion that our age is constantly getting better, they dream of world-peace, great advancement and prosperity. That God has written a different program in His Word revealed by the Prophets of God in visions and confirmed by our Lord and His Apostles is completely forgotten. And this setting aside of the Word of Prophecy has produced in Christendom similar conditions to those in unbelieving Israel. And there are others who assent in a measure to the visions of the Prophets concerning things to come, but they are unconcerned about it. It has no meaning for them. Like Israel they say, "The vision that he seeth is for many days to come and he prophesieth of the times that are afar off" (verse 27). It reminds us of the language of the evil servant who said, "My lord delayeth his coming."

But what was God's answer? He would end this false hope and false security. The lying proverb which the false prophets had them inspired to use would be changed into another. "The days are at hand and the effect of every vision." All false visions, false divinations and false hopes which had become so widespread among Israel were to cease, for the burden of true Prophecy would now be fulfilled. Then solemnly He declared that His Word was to be done. The Word which He spoke would come to pass. Even so every word which the Prophets had spoken concerning the judgment of Jerusalem, the devastation of the land and the dispersion of the people came to pass.

May we remember that when the world says "Peace and safety," then sudden destruction shall come upon them (1 Thess. v:1-5). The world and an apostate church may dream of peace and safety, sneer at divine interference in mighty judgments, laugh at a second, visible and glorious coming of the same Lord who died and was raised from the dead, ridicule the establishment of His great kingdom on this earth and say every vision faileth—yet we know that the vision will not fail. What God has spoken will be done. The vision may yet be for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak and not lie; though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come; it will not tarry (Hab. ii:3). "Say unto them, The days are at hand." This was God's message to a people deceived by false hopes of peace. And may this not be the Lord's message to us in these dark and solemn days, when the clouds of judgment are gathering, the days are at hand? May we as the children of light and of the day wait for the fulfilment of the vision. It will surely come and not tarry.

THE MESSAGE AGAINST THE FALSE PROPHETS AND PROPHETESSES.

Chapter xiii.

The message which follows the preceding one on the certainty of the doom of Jerusalem is directed against the false prophets and prophetesses who were at work among the people, and who antagonized the God-given utterances of the true messengers of the Lord. These men and women may well be termed the curse of Israel, because all they did was a curse to the people. Their words inspired the rebellious people with a false hope and kept them from turning to the Lord in true repentance. They advocated a national alliance of Israel with Egypt and other empires, while the true prophets exhorted Israel to put their confidence exclusively in the Lord. The false prophets paid no heed to the moral and religious conditions of the people of God. They saw nothing alarming in the drift away from God, in the increasing immoralities, but in view of all this they continued to cry peace, peace; but the true prophets sounded the alarm and without mincing words uncovered the degenerating conditions of the people.

I. The False Prophets: their Guilt and Condemnation.

And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man prophesying against the prophets of Israel that prophesy, and say thou unto them that prophesy out of their own hearts, Hear ye the word of the Lord; Thus saith the Lord God; Woe unto the foolish prophets, that follow their own spirit, and have seen nothing! O Israel, thy prophets are like the foxes in the deserts. Ye have not gone up into the gaps, neither made up the hedge for the house of Israel to stand in the battle in the day of the Lord. They have seen vanity and lying divination, saying, The Lord saith: and the Lord hath not sent them: and they have made others to hope that they would confirm the word. Have ye not seen a vain vision, and have ye not spoken a lying divination, whereas ye say, The Lord saith it, albeit I have not spoken? (verses 1-7).

The first charge brought against the false prophets is that they prophesy out of their own hearts. It has been also translated "who prophesy from their own mind without having seen." Here we have a divine definition of the false prophets in a very concise form. Their words came out of their own hearts, they were not founded upon the vision of the Lord, the message He gives by His Spirit, but the product of their own minds. They gave expression to the thoughts of their own darkened hearts and paid no heed whatever to the revelation of God. And here let us be reminded of what is written in the New Testament concerning the same class of men who are predicted to appear especially at the close of the present age, doing a work in Christendom which fully corresponds to the work of these false prophets in Jeremiah's and Ezekiel's day. "But there were false prophets also among the people (Israel), even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways, by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of" (2 Peter ii:1-2). Jude in his Epistle gives a more complete picture of them. He speaks of these false teachers of Christendom as "speaking evil of those things which they know not, but what they know naturally (as natural men, unregenerated) as brute beasts, in those things they corrupt themselves" (verse 10). "Their mouth speaketh great swelling words (a divine definition of modern day 'pulpit oratory'), having men's persons in admiration because of advantage" (verse 16). They were mockers who walk after their own lusts; having not the Spirit (verse 19). The Apostle Paul speaks of them as wolves (Acts xx:29) and our Lord warned of them. "Beware of false Prophets, which come to you in

sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves" (Matt. vii:15).

And such false teachers, men who pose as religious leaders, are doing their dreadful and delusive work throughout the professing church. Every man who prophesies out of his own heart, who utters his own mind, whose teaching and preaching is not according to the oracles of God, who pays no heed to what the Lord has said is a false prophet. And such abound in the closing days of the church on earth. Hundreds of men who are accredited religious teachers ignore the visions of God, have no heart and no ear for what the Lord has revealed, yea, more than that, they reject the inspiration and revelation of the Word of God and in its place preach and teach the opinions of their own corrupt and darkened minds and the traditions of men. A true prophet of God and a true leader is altogether subject to the Word of God. His one business is to expound the Word of God. He speaks as the oracles of God. He does what is written in 2 Cor. x:5: "Casting down imaginations (the working of the mind apart from the Word of God) and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." The Apostle Paul is a perfect example of such a true mouthpiece of the Lord. Naturally gifted with a keen mind, learned and cultured, yet he wrote to the Corinthians, "And I, brethren, when I come to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and Him crucified" —"And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power" (1 Cor. ii:1-4).

And like the false prophets among Israel the false prophets and teachers in Christendom are responsible for the deplor-

able conditions of the professing people of God. Instead of sounding God's warning they cover up and lead the people into the dark, where they are themselves. The responsibilities of those men who deny the authority of the Bible, who prophesy out of their own hearts is far greater than any pen can describe.

And what else did the Lord say about them in Ezekiel's message? "They have seen vanity and lying divination, saying, The Lord saith, and the Lord hath not sent them." Here is the root of the matter. The Lord never sent them; He never called them into the office of a prophet or teacher. They are self-called and self-sent. Being therefore not the chosen instruments of the Lord, knowing not His Word nor obeying His Spirit, they become the instruments of "lying divination." Behind their messages of a false hope and false peace stands the father of lies. 1 Kings xxii:19-23 throws important light upon this. It was a lying spirit who possessed the false prophets in Ahab's times. Even so it is predicted of the last days that the people will give heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons (1 Tim. iv:1).

> Therefore thus saith the Lord God; Because ye have spoken vanity, and seen lies, therefore, behold, I am against you, saith the Lord God. And mine hand shall be upon the prophets that see vanity and that divine lies; they shall not be in the assembly of my people, neither shall they be written in the writing of the house of Israel, neither shall they enter into the land of Israel; and ye shall know that I am the Lord God. Because, even because they have seduced my people, saying, Peace; and there was no peace; and one built up a wall, and, lo, others daubed it with untempered mortar: Say unto them which daub it with untempered mortar, that it shall fall: there shall be an overflowing shower; and ye, O great hailstones, shall fall; and a stormy wind shall rend it. Lo, when the wall is fallen, shall it not be said unto you, Where is the daubing wherewith ye have daubed it. Therefore thus saith the Lord God; I will even rend it with a stormy wind in my fury; and there shall be an overflowing shower in mine anger, and great

hailstone in my fury, to consume it. So will I break down the wall that ye have daubed with untempered mortar, and bring it down to the ground, so that the foundation thereof shall be discovered, and it shall fall, and ye shall be consumed in the midst thereof, and ye shall know that I am the Lord. Thus will I accomplish my wrath upon the wall, and upon them that have daubed it with untempered mortar and will say unto you: The wall is no more, neither they that daubed it; to wit the prophets of Israel which prophesy concerning Jerusalem, and which see visions of peace for them, and there is no peace saith the Lord God (verses 8-16).

And next the message pronounces the condemnation and punishment of these false prophets. The Lord is against them. His hand is to be upon them for punishment. Three things are mentioned in which their punishment is going to consist: they are to be excluded from the assembly of God's people; they will be outcasts like lepers and such they were; their names are not to be mentioned in the writings of Israel; their memory will be blotted out, their names forgotten; finally they were not to enter into the land of Israel. This is not too severe if one thinks of the souls these false prophets destroyed and the wicked work they did, for it is wickedness to reject the Word of God and substitute for it human inventions.

A more solemn word is pronounced in the New Testament against those who continue in Christendom the pernicious and deceiving work of these false teachers. It is written, "If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are" (1 Cor. iii:17). That is, believers constitute the temple of God, that is, the church. The church has for its foundation the Truth of God, the doctrine of Christ. A rejection of the doctrine of Christ, so common in our day, defiles this spiritual temple of God. It is the worst profanation. And the false leader with his work corrupts the best, the holiest.

"Him shall God destroy!" May God's people heed the warning to have no fellowship with such who as hirelings do the work of false prophets.

And these false prophets seduced the people. The delusion consisted in saying, Peace, and there was no peace. This is a characteristic of those who follow not God's revelation but their own hearts. While God has threatened a world which lieth in the wicked one, an age which is evil and which never can be anything but evil, with judgments to come, they preach peace and safety.

He describes them as building a wall and then putting some untempered stuff, a whitewash, upon the wall. The wall is for defence. They invented all kinds of schemes and policies, political, religious and religious-political. This was done to sustain their false messages and false hopes. Then to hide the defects, they whitewashed their walls, they glazed it over with nice and high sounding phrases. Such is the case to-day. Oh! the schemes, the religious-political combinations which are used to accomplish certain ends which are nowhere authorized by the Word of God. And the whitewash, the enticing, beautiful words which are used to cover it over and make it appear as being secure! And Ezekiel was commanded to say to these whitewashers, "It shall fall!" A great storm with wind and flood would strike it and the wall, the schemes and inventions of men were to collapse (see Matt. vii:26-27). Even so the judgment came upon Jerusalem and the land of Israel and swept away the false prophets and what they had built up. Another judgment will sweep over Christendom and sweep away the "destructive critics," the false teachers and leaders of delusive movements which flourish everywhere. Then the divine mockery: "Lo, when the wall is fallen, shall it not be said unto you, where is the daubing wherewith ye have daubed it?" (verse 12). When God fulfills His predictions written

in the Word, when a boasting, Christless civilization, an apostate church are engulfed in the judgment with which this present age ends, where will be the nice sounding whitewash of the false prophets?

II. The False Prophetesses.

> Likewise, thou son of man, set thy face against the daughters of thy people, which prophesy out of their own heart; and prophesy thou against them, And say, Thus saith the Lord God; Woe to the women that sew pillows to all armholes, and make veils for the head of every stature to hunt souls! Will ye hunt the souls of my people, and will ye save the souls alive that come unto you? And will ye pollute me among my people for handfuls of barley and for pieces of bread, to slay the souls that should not die, and to save the souls alive that should not live, by your lying to my people that hear your lies? Wherefore thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I am against your pillows, wherewith ye that hunt the souls to make them fly, and I will tear them from your arms, and will let the souls go, even the souls that ye hunt to make them fly. Your veils also will I tear, and deliver my people out of your hand, and they shall be no more in your hand to be hunted; and ye shall know that I am the Lord. Because with lies ye have made the heart of the righteous sad, whom I have not made sad; and strengthened the hands of the wicked, that he should not return from his wicked way by promising him life: Therefore ye shall see no more vanity, nor divine divinations: for I will deliver my people out of your hand, and ye shall know that I am the Lord (verses 17-23).

And there were false women prophets among Israel likewise. This is a significant fact. Women became religious leaders and teachers in the days of Jerusalem's downfall and the worst degradation followed upon that. They also prophesied out of their own hearts and added other wicked things to it. They sewed pillows upon all elbows and made veils for the head to hunt for souls. This has been interpreted in different ways. It means that they used amulets, little idol images and other things by which they practised the so-called divination—the soothsaying. It is sorcery to

which these women prophets gave themselves up. The veils which they used were to give to it a priestly air of mysticism. They practised the sinister art of magic, or as we call it nowadays, occultism. It was witchcraft, this binding on of pillows and other things. This they did for hire and to slay souls which should not be slain and to sustain the wicked in their wickedness. Here is also undoubtedly a hint about their wicked incantations, the spells they claimed to cast that the innocent souls should die and the guilty should live. But the Prophet declares now that the Lord will deal with them, expose their wicked practises, tear off their devices and deliver His people out of the snare.

All this is also done in the very midst of Christendom in the twentieth century. Women prophets, the most subtle instruments of Satan, are plentiful in these days. The fact has often been pointed out that the prominent leaders in the evil cults of the last days are women. There has been a strange modern day revival of occult practices upon Christian ground. Spiritualism, Theosophy and Christian Science belong to this class. All three started with women. Spiritualism with its mediums, fortune-tellers and necromancers is almost entirely in the hands of women, who claim to be religious leaders. The same is true of Theosophy, with its Hindu philosophy and occultism, surrounded with an air of unholy mysticism. Christian Science is closely related to these two cults. Its founder practised for a time the calling of a medium.

Significant is the description of the work of these false prophets and prophetesses in verse 22: "Because with lies ye have made the heart of the righteous sad, whom I have not made sad; and strengthened the hands of the wicked, that he should not return from his wicked way, by promising him life." The righteous in Israel were saddened by their evil work. To the wicked they promised life, that there was

no future punishment for their sins. Hence the wicked continued in his wickedness.

And is the work of the false teachers, the false women-cults, any different? The righteous are saddened. Each one of the false teachers and movements like Spiritualism, Theosophy, Russellism, Christian Science and others deny the eternal punishment of the wicked. They strengthen the hands of the wicked by promising him life.

THE MESSAGE AGAINST THE IDOLATROUS ELDERS.

Chapter xiv.

The elders now appear to inquire of the Lord through the prophet (verse 3; xx:1). Though the prophet had faithfully uttered the messages of judgment and impending doom and the people and their leaders had heard them, yet would they inquire of the Lord. The Word, the Lord had sent to them, they rejected and now they expected some new kind of a message. When these inquiring elders were in the presence of Ezekiel, the Word of the Lord came unto him. This chapter contains two sections; each is introduced by the statement, "And the Word of the Lord came unto me."

I. The Idolatrous Elder. The Call to Repentance.

Then came certain of the elders of Israel unto me, and sat before me. And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, these men have set up their idols in their heart, and put the stumbling-block of their iniquity before their face: should I be enquired of at all by them? Therefore speak unto them, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; Every man of the house of Israel that setteth up his idols in his heart, and putteth the stumbling-block of his iniquity before his face, and cometh to the prophet; I the Lord will answer him that cometh according to the multitude of his idols; That I may take the house of Israel in their own heart, because they are all estranged from me through their idols. Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord

God; Repent, and turn yourselves from your idols; and turn away your faces from all your abominations. For every one of the house of Israel, or of the stranger that sojourneth in Israel, which separateth himself from me, and setteth up his idols in his heart, and putteth the stumbling block of his iniquity before his face, and cometh to a prophet to enquire of him concerning me; I the Lord will answer him by myself. And I will set my face against that man, and will make him a sign and a proverb, and I will cut him off from the midst of my people; and ye shall know that I am the Lord. And if the prophet be deceived when he hath spoken a thing, I the Lord have deceived that prophet, and I will stretch out my hand upon him, and will destroy him from the midst of my people Israel. And they shall bear the punishment of their iniquity: the punishment of the prophet shall be even as the punishment of him that seeketh unto him; That the house of Israel may go no more astray from me, neither be polluted any more with all their transgressions; but that they may be my people, and I may be their God, saith the Lord God (verses 1-11).

These inquiring elders with wickedness in their hearts, give another illustration of the depth of degradation in which the people had sunken. He who searches the hearts knew what was in them. They came with pious, religious pretensions. It sounded well to inquire of the Lord and seek the prophet-priest for that purpose. Their hearts were full of evil. While their lips spoke of asking the Lord, their hearts were full of idolatry. They liked idolatry. Their hearts were in it and this stumbling-block of their iniquity they had put before their faces, which means they openly defied the Lord God of Israel by their doings "Should I be inquired of at all by them?" To seek the Lord and inquire of Him in such a condition reveals a brazen spirit and the deepest depravity. Yet this also belongs to the conditions in which the professing people of God are when judgment overtakes them. We see much of it in our own days. There is a great deal of so-called religious exercise and activity, attempts to produce more "religiousness," as it

is termed. There is, however, no real heart-turning to the Lord, but the idols are kept in heart and life. "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me" (Psa. lxvi:18). Then the Lord tells them through the prophet, "I, the Lord, will answer him that cometh according to the multitude of their idols; that I may take the house of Israel in their own heart because they are all estranged from me through their idols." Estranged from Jehovah through idols; this described the spiritual condition of these certain elders and the people. If God's people do not give the Lord the place of pre-eminence and follow Him wholly they become estranged from Him. And such is the condition of thousands of professing Christians who walk in a carnal way, who follow their idols instead of the Lord and who still maintain an outward religiousness. Then follows the call to repentance. "Repent and turn yourselves from your idols." Next is the announcement that the Lord Himself will deal with such miserable hypocrites. He will answer the unrepenting, idol follower, who separates himself from the Lord. No true prophet of Jehovah would certainly encourage the men who inquire of the Lord and have evil in their hearts, for fellowship with Jehovah is impossible for such.

The ninth verse states more than a possibility. "And if the prophet be deceived when he hath spoken a thing, I, the Lord, have deceived the prophet, and I will stretch out my hand upon him, and I will destroy him from the midst of my people Israel." As we learned in the previous prophetic message that such deceiving prophets were in abundance among Israel. They were the curse of the nation. Little did they care about the spiritual condition of the people. They prophesied for filthy lucre's sake and lived in sin like the rest of the apostates. To them people came to inquire of the Lord and the deceiving prophets prophesied smooth things. But the Lord Himself as a

judgment had deceived their prophets to ripen the people for the deserved doom. It is the same what Micaiah declared in the presence of King Jehosaphat and King Ahab (1 Kings xxii:13-23). The four hundred prophets of Ahab were possessed by a lying spirit.

II. Judgment is Unavoidable.

The word of the Lord came again to me, saying, Son of man, when the land sinneth against me by trespassing grievously, then will I stretch out mine hand upon it, and will break the staff of the bread thereof, and will send famine upon it, and will cut off man and beast from it: Though these three men, Noah, Daniel and Job, were in it, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness, saith the Lord God. If I cause noisome beasts to pass through the land, and they spoil it, so that it be desolate, that no man may pass through because of the beasts: Though these three men were in it, as I live, saith the Lord God, they shall deliver neither sons nor daughters; they only shall be delivered, but the land shall be desolate. Or if I bring a sword upon that land, and say, Sword, go through the land; so that I cut off man and beast from it: Though these three men were in it, as I live, saith the Lord God, they shall deliver neither sons nor daughters, but they only shall be delivered themselves. Or if I send a pestilence into that land, and pour out my fury upon it in blood, to cut off from it man and beast: though Noah, Daniel and Job were in it, as I live, saith the Lord God, they shall deliver neither son nor daughter; they shall but deliver their own souls by their righteousness. For thus saith the Lord God; How much more when I send my fourscore judgments upon Jerusalem, the sword, and the famine, and the noisome beast, and the pestilence, to cut off from it man and beast? Yet, behold, therein shall be left a remnant that shall be brought forth, both sons and daughters: behold, they shall come forth unto you, and ye shall see their way and their doings: and ye shall be comforted concerning the evil that I have brought upon Jerusalem, even concerning all that I have brought upon it. And they shall see their ways and their doings: and ye shall know that I have not done without cause all that I have done in it, saith the Lord God (verses 12-23).

The Word of the Lord came again to Ezekiel. The pre-

viously announced judgment cannot be averted, it is unavoidable; this is the burden of the second message the inquiring elders heard from the prophet's lips. Perhaps this was on their minds when they came to the prophet and sat in his presence. Famine is threatened first; it would come upon man and beast. Then the noisome beasts would pass through the land, to spoil it and make it desolate. These beasts must not be understood in the literal sense; they symbolize the Gentiles, whom Daniel in his vision saw also as beasts (Dan. vii). These nations like the Chaldeans would overrun the land and waste it. The last two judgments were to be the sword (verse 17) and the pestilence (verse 19). These four sore judgments were about to fall upon Jerusalem and the land—famine, noisome beasts, Gentile invasion, the sword and pestilence. Twice in this address Noah, Daniel and Job are mentioned. They were righteous men, yet if they were all three in Jerusalem they would deliver only their own souls by their righteousness, which was the result of their faith in and obedience to Jehovah. They were witnesses and men of prayer. Noah, the witness before the great judgment by water swept over the earth; Daniel even then in Babylon, and Job of the patriarchal age. All their righteousness, and all their witnessing and prayers would not help in preventing these four sore judgments. Then there is a gracious promise for the remnant which is to be preserved in these judgments.

THE PARABLE OF THE UNFRUITFUL VINE.

Chapter xv.

The next three chapters contain divinely given parables. The object of these parables is to expose still further the false hopes which the people had during the reign of Zedekiah, the last King of Judah. He rebelled against King Nebuchadnezzar after the second invasion (2 Kings xxiv:20).

He hoped, and the people with him, that deliverance would come through the alliances Zedekiah had formed with Edom, Ammon, Tyre and Sidon. He also had sent to Egypt for help. "But he rebelled against him (the king of Babylon) in sending ambassadors into Egypt that they might give him horses and much people" (Ezek. xvii:15). In all this Zedekiah and the remnant of people left in the land despised the Word of Jehovah. Prophet after prophet had delivered the same message concerning the ultimate and complete overthrow of Jerusalem. During Josiah's reign in the midst of the great reformation-revival, Hulda, the prophetess, had given the warning, "I will bring evil upon this place, and upon the inhabitants thereof" (2 Kings xxii:16). The great reformation could not keep back the decreed judgment. Nor can any reformation movement in the close of our own age avert the judgment which is predicted upon an ungodly world and an apostate church. Josiah's reign was followed by the reign of Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin and Zedekiah. It went from bad to worse. Twice Nebuchadnezzar had come and spoiled Jerusalem. It was evident that Jehovah's judgment was being gradually executed upon the land and the city. We have learned from the preceding chapters how often and in how many different ways the Lord had repeated through Ezekiel's visions and utterances that the judgment would surely do its complete work, and that nothing would be able to arrest it. Yet Zedekiah, in the awful blindness characteristic of all who deliberately reject the Word of God and continue in an impenitent state, hoped for better things. And the exiles also shared more or less this false hope.

Three parables were therefore given to Ezekiel to demonstrate still further the false and vain hope and the delusion that there would be deliverance. The Parable of the unfruitful vine shows that the nation was good for nothing, and burning awaited the city. This is followed by a sec-

ond parable, one of the most beautiful in the Word of God: the parable of the abandoned child in the field. That child, Jerusalem, had bestowed upon all the mercy and grace a loving God could give. And after all had been done she became a wanton harlot and turned from Him who loved her so much. Linked with the second parable is the restoration promise still unfulfilled. The third parable is the parable of the great eagles. Here judgment upon the nation is once more announced. And after that Ezekiel spoke in Jehovah's name the final word: "As I live, saith the Lord God, surely in the place where the king dwelleth (Nebuchadnezzar in Babylon) that made him king (Zedekiah was made king by Nebuchadnezzar), whose oath he despised (Zedekiah had sworn to Nebuchadnezzar and then broke the oath), even with him in the midst of Babylon he shall die." "And I will spread my net upon him, and he shall be taken in my snare, and I will bring him to Babylon, and will plead with him there for his trespass that he hath trespassed against me" (Ezek. xvii:16, 20).

I. The Parable of the Unfruitful Vine.

And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, What is the vine tree more than any tree, or than a branch which is among the trees of the forest? Shall wood be taken thereof to do any work, or will men take a pin of it to hang any vessel thereon? Behold, it is cast into the fire for fuel; the fire devoureth both the ends of it, and the midst of it is burned. Is it meet for any work? Behold, when it was whole, it was meet for no work: how much less shall it be meet yet for any work, when the fire hath devoured it, and it is burned? Therefore, thus saith the Lord God; As the vine tree among the trees of the forest, which I have given to the fire for fuel, so will I give the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And I will set my face against them; they shall go out from one fire, and another fire shall devour them; and ye shall know that I am the Lord, when I set my face against them. And I will make the land desolate, because they have committed a trespass, saith the Lord God (verses 1-8).

The vine is a type of the people Israel. Perhaps their confidence and boast was in the knowledge that they were the vine of Jehovah. Their false prophets may have quoted the words of Asaph in that beautiful prayer addressed to the Shepherd of Israel: "Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt; thou hast cast out the heathen and planted it. Thou preparedst room for it, and didst cause it to take deep root, and it filled the land. The hills were covered with the shadow of it and the boughs thereof were like the goodly cedars. She sent out her boughs unto the sea, and her branches unto the river. Why hast thou then broken down her hedges, so that all they that pass by the way do pluck her?" (Psalm lxxx:8-12). But they forgot that judgment had been long ago pronounced against the vine and the vineyard of Israel. Isaiah has spoken of the vineyard and what Jehovah had done for His people. But the vine brought forth wild grapes. "And now go to; I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard. I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; and will break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down. And I will lay it waste. It shall not be pruned or digged; but there shall come up briers and thorns; I will also command the clouds that they rain not upon it" (Isaiah v:1-6). And Hosea, too, had borne witness against the vine: "Israel is an empty vine, he bringeth forth fruit unto himself; according to the multitude of his fruit he hath increased the altars; according to the goodness of the land they have made goodly images" (Hosea x:1).

Their boast of being the vine and vineyard of Jehovah was an idle one. Ezekiel's parable demonstrates this. The vine tree is only good for one thing and that is the bearing of fruit. Apart from fruit bearing the vine is worthless. The wood of it cannot be used for anything whatever. Is it meet for any work? Will men take a piece of it and hang a

vessel thereon? It is good for nothing else but to be burned with fire. Cast into the fire for fuel it is burned at both ends and in the midst. This was to be the certain fate of Jerusalem. The process of the fiery judgment consuming the unfruitful vine tree had already begun. "And I will set my face against them; they shall go out from one fire and another fire shall devour them; and ye shall know that I am the Lord, when I set my face against them." Even so it came upon the city when Nebuchadnezzar came against Jerusalem the third time. "And he burnt the house of the Lord, and the King's house, and all the houses of Jerusalem, and every great man's house burnt he with fire" (2 Kings xxv:9). And here we must also remember the statement our Lord made in the parable of the vine and the branches. "If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered, and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned" (John xv:6). Some apply this also to Israel. It means, however, the professing believer, who in an empty profession claims to be a branch in Him who is the true vine. Such a one is a barren branch, good only for burning.

Our Lord's parable of the vineyard (Matt. xxi:33, etc.) must here likewise be considered. It brings together all the prophets had spoken concerning Israel as the vineyard, as well as the crowning sin of the people, in the rejection and death of the Lord Jesus, and the judgment which came upon Jerusalem and the nation.

But there is a day coming when the Lord will graciously visit the vine again, when He will have mercy upon Zion. Of this the already quoted eightieth Psalm bears a blessed testimony.

The prayer of the godly remnant of the Jewish people at the close of the times of the Gentiles is pre-written in that Psalm by the Holy Spirit. Let us listen to it. "Return

we beeseech thee, O God of hosts; look down from heaven, and behold, and visit this vine and the vineyard which thy right hand hath planted, and the branch that thou madest strong for thyself. It is burned with fire, it is cut down; they perish at the rebuke of thy countenance. Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand (the Lord Jesus Christ), upon the son of man, whom thou madest strong for thyself. So will we not go back from thee; quicken us, and we will call upon thy name" (Psalm lxxx:14-18).

THE PARABLE OF THE ABANDONED CHILD. JERUSALEM'S IDOLATRY. THE PROMISES OF RESTORATION.

Chapter xvi.

After the parable of the unfruitful vine in which the vain hope and boast of Jerusalem is briefly exposed, another parable was uttered by the Prophet, which more fully establishes Jerusalem's great wickedness. The chapter before us is one of the greatest in the prophetic Scriptures. It contains a wonderful history of Jerusalem, past, present and future, and God's dealings with her.

We give first a brief survey of this interesting chapter before we take up a more analytical study. The parable of the abandoned child and Jehovah's love and mercy in taking her up, saving the perishing one from death and bestowing upon her such gracious labor and gifts, forms the first part of the chapter (verse 1-14). It is a most beautiful description of what Jehovah had done for Jerusalem. After this, the terrible ingratitude and fall of Jerusalem is uncovered. She, whom Jehovah lifted so high, upon whom He bestowed such love and grace, turned against Jehovah and became an abandoned prostitute. The idolatries of Jerusalem and corresponding moral degradations are vividly

pictured in this second section of the chapter (verses 15-34). Then follows the announcement of the doom of Jerusalem. In this third section Samaria and her daughters, as well as Sodom and her daughters are introduced, and their return to the former estate with Jerusalem is announced.

These restoration promises are frequently used by teachers of the so-called "larger hope," who deny the eternal punishment of the wicked. It is claimed that Sodom and her daughters, all the inhabitants of wicked Sodom, who perished in the great judgment, will be raised from the dead and have another chance. We shall, in considering this portion of the chapter (verses 35-59), show the unscripturalness of this theory as well as the true meaning of the promise. The fourth section (verses 59-63) promises the establishment of Jehovah's covenant with Jerusalem.

I. The Parable of the Abandoned Child.

Again the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, cause Jerusalem to know her abominations, and say, Thus saith the Lord God unto Jerusalem; Thy birth and thy nativity is of the land of Canaan; thy father was an Amorite, and thy mother an Hittite. And as for thy nativity, in the day thou wast born thy navel was not cut, neither wast thou washed in water to supple thee; thou was not salted at all, nor swaddled at all. None eye pitied thee, to do any of these unto thee, to have compassion upon thee; but thou wast cast out in the open field, to the loathing of thy person, in the day that thou wast born. And when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live; yea, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live. I have caused thee to multiply as the bud of the field, and thou hast increased and waxen great, and thou art come to excellent ornaments: thy breasts are fashioned, and thine hair is grown, whereas thou wast naked and bare. Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness; yea, I sware unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord God, and thou becamest mine. Then

washed I thee with water; yea, I thoroughly washed away thy blood from thee, and I anointed thee with oil. I clothed thee also with broidered work, and shod thee with badgers' skin, and I girded thee about with fine linen, and I covered thee with silk. I decked thee also with ornaments, and I put bracelets upon thy hands, and a chain on thy neck. And I put a jewel on thy forehead, and earrings in thine ears, and a beautiful crown upon thine head. Thus wast thou decked with gold and silver; and thy raiment was of fine linen and silk and broidered work; thou didst eat fine flour, and honey and oil; and thou wast exceeding beautiful, and thou didst prosper into a kingdom. And thy renown went forth among the heathen for thy beauty: for it was perfect through my comeliness, which I had put upon thee, saith the Lord God (verses 1-14).

In the beginning of the chapter the purpose of the parable is stated. "Son of Man, cause Jerusalem to know her abominations." To convict Jerusalem of all her guilt and wickedness the Lord shows first of all what He had done for her. While Jerusalem is specially mentioned, the parable has a wider application to the nation itself. The different dealings of the Lord with His people can be traced in this beautiful parable. First, Jerusalem's origin is mentioned. "Thy birth and thy nativity is of the land of Canaan; thy father was an Amorite and thy mother a Hittite." This does not mean Abraham and Sarah, from which the nation sprang, but it refers to the origin of the city itself, which was Canaanitish. The Amorites were the original possessors of Palestine, as we learn from Genesis xv:16. The name for Palestine in the cuneiform inscriptions is "Land of the Amorites." The Hittites are also mentioned in Genesis as the inhabitants of the land. (Genesis xxiii:3, 10; xxvii:46). Thus Jerusalem is described as coming from a base and unclean parentage. The Lord had mercy on her whose condition was like an abandoned child cast out into an open field. He passed by and spoke the word, which He alone could speak—Live! Then He began

His work of mercy. He caused her to multiply as the bud of the field. He made her to increase. He entered into a covenant with her. "Yea, I swear unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord God, and thou becamest mine." Furthermore, we read, "I washed thee with water"; "I anointed thee with oil"; "I clothed"; "I girded thee"; "I covered thee with silk." Ornaments were bestowed upon the beloved one. Bracelets upon the hands; a chain for the neck; a jewel for the forehead; earrings for the ears; decked with gold and silver; arrayed in fine linen and silk and broidered work, feeding on fine flour, honey and oil—such were Jehovah's gifts to Jerusalem. A beautiful crown was put upon her head. Jerusalem became exceedingly beautiful and prospered into a kingdom. Her renown went forth among the nations on account of her beauty. All this is a striking allegory of Jehovah's mercy to Jerusalem, and the culmination refers to the days of the glorious kingdom under Solomon. There is no need of applying every statement to some historical fact in the history of Jerusalem as it has been attempted by certain expositors. The purpose, as already stated, is to convict Jerusalem of her abominations, and for this reason Jehovah's goodness to her is so vividly described. Jehovah had done all for her and not a word is said about gratitude or love from the side of Jerusalem. All was done for her by Him. "It was perfect through my comeliness (magnificence), which I had put upon thee, saith the Lord God."

And this sweet parable illustrates, as few other portions in the Old Testament do, the grace which the Lord bestows upon the believer in the Gospel. Thy father, an Amorite, and thy mother, a Hittite, reminds us of what is true of all men, so tersely expressed in David's confession, "Behold I was shapen in iniquity and in sin did my mother conceive

me" (Psalm li:5). Like the child pictured in the parable, we are lost, perishing in the field (the world). What could that perishing child do to save itself? Even so we cannot do anything to save ourselves. The Lord passing by had compassion and spoke His Word of power—Live. He came from Heaven to this earth, into the field to seek and save what is lost. He found man in the vile and helpless condition so aptly pictured by the miserable child. And more than that, He died to save man. He gave His life so that we might live. The first thing He does for the believing sinner is to give him life. When the spiritual dead hear His voice they live. The washing with water, the anointing with oil (type of the Holy Spirit), the announcement "thou becamest mine," as well as the clothing, the beautifying and the crowning, all illustrates what His marvelous grace does for the trusting, believing sinner. It is all grace from start to finish, from the impartation of life in the new birth to the crowning in glory.

II. Jerusalem's Idolatries and Moral Degradation.

But thou didst trust in thine own beauty, and playedst the harlot because of thy renown, and pouredst out thy fornications on every one that passed by; his it was. And of thy garments thou didst take, and deckedst thy high places with divers colors, and playedst the harlot thereupon: the like things shall not come, neither shall it be so. Thou hast also taken thy fair jewels of my gold and of my silver, which I had given thee, and madest to thyself images of men, and didst commit whoredom with them. And tookest thy broidered garments, and coveredst them: and thou hast set mine oil and mine incense before them. My meat also which I gave thee, fine flour, and oil, and honey, wherewith I fed thee, thou hast even set it before them for a sweet savor: and thus it was, saith the Lord God. Moreover thou hast taken thy sons and thy daughters, whom thou hast borne unto me, and these hast thou sacrified unto them to be devoured. Is this of thy whoredoms a small matter. That thou has slain my children, and delivered them to cause them to pass through the fire for them? And in all

thine abominations and thy whoredoms thou hast not remembered the days of thy youth, when thou wast naked and bare, and wast polluted in thy blood. And it came to pass after all thy wickedness, (woe, woe unto thee! saith the Lord God), That thou hast also built unto thee an eminent place, and hast made thee a high place in every street. Thou hast built thy high place at every head of the way, and hast made thy beauty to be abhorred, and hast opened thy feet to every one that passed by, and multiplied thy whoredoms. Thou hast also committed fornication with the Egyptians thy neighbors, great of flesh; and hast increased thy whoredoms, to provoke me to anger. Behold, therefore, I have stretched out my hand over thee, and have diminished thine ordinary food, and delivered thee unto the will of them that hate thee, the daughters of the Philistines, which are ashamed of thy lewd way. Thou hast played the whore also with the Assyrians, because thou wast unsatiable; yea, thou hast played the harlot with them, and couldest not be satisfied. Thou hast moreover multiplied thy fornication in the land of Canaan unto Chaldea; and yet thou wast not satisfied herewith. How weak is thine heart, saith the Lord God, seeing thou doest all these things, the work of an imperious whorish woman; in that thou buildest thine eminent place in the head of every way, and makest thine high place in every street; and hast not been as a harlot, in that thou scornest hire; but as a wife that committeth adultery, which taketh strangers instead of her husband! They give gifts to all whores; but thou givest thy gifts to all thy lovers, and hires them, that they may come unto thee on every side of thy whoredom. And the contrary is in thee from other women in thy whoredoms, whereas none followeth thee to commit whoredoms; and in that thou givest a reward, and no reward is given unto thee, therefore thou art contrary (verses 15-24).

Upon the beautiful background of Jehovah's love and mercy, there is now written the dark picture of Jerusalem's whoredoms, symbolical of her wicked idolatries. "But thou didst trust in thine own beauty, and played the harlot because of thy renown, and pouredst out thy fornications on every one that passed by; his it was" (verse 15). It started all with pride. Jerusalem did not acknowledge the giver, who had made her great. Instead of worshipping

in Jehovah's appointed way, they established the "high places" and conformed to all the wicked Canaanitish practices. The wickedness of the Amorites and Hittites, from which she came, were reproduced in her. Their little ones were given to Moloch as a sacrifice. "Moreover thou hast taken thy sons and thy daughters, whom thou hast borne unto me, and these hast thou sacrificed unto them to be devoured. Is this of thy whoredoms a small matter, that thou hast slain thy children, and delivered them to pass through the fire for them?" (verses 20-21). From the Second Book of Kings we learn that Ahaz was the first king who committed this atrocity. "He made his son pass through the fire, according to the abominations of the heathen whom the Lord cast out from before the children of Israel" (2 Kings xvi:3). And Manasseh, the wicked son of a pious father, also followed the same horrible practice (2 Kings xxi:6). The historical books of Second Kings and Second Chronicles must be read to understand more fully the symbolical language used by Ezekiel and to learn the idolatry and degradation of Jerusalem. All Jehovah had given and bestowed upon her was devoted to practice this spiritual fornication. What Jehovah had done for her was forgotten.

"And in all thine abominations and thy whoredoms thou hast not remembered the days of thy youth, when thou wast naked and bare, and wast polluted in thy blood" (verse 22). But worse than that followed. Not enough that Jerusalem had her high places and revived the practices of the Canaanitish natives, she began to have also idolatrous intercourse with the idol-gods of Egypt, Assyria and Chaldea (verses 23-34). She sought them out and courted them all to increase her harlotry. So great became Jerusalem's abominations that the daughters of the Philistines became ashamed of her lewd way (verse 27). And while such was

the religious degradation of Jerusalem in following the basest and most corrupt idolatries, a corresponding moral degradation was linked with it. All the rites of the Canaanites and the other nations consisted in the grossest immoralities. The most shameless and the vilest things of the flesh were practiced in the midst of the idolatrous city. "How is the faithful city become a harlot!" (Isaiah 1:21). In the next section the Lord addresses her by that title and once more her judgment doom is announced. "Wherefore, O harlot, hear the word of the Lord" (verse 35).

The spiritual adultery which characterizes the end of the present age is even greater than that of Jerusalem. The apostasy of Jerusalem is overshadowed by the rising tide of an approaching, final apostasy in which Satan's man and masterpeice will demand and receive the worship which belongs to the Lord. Antichrist, yet to come, his shadow cast so sharply in our days, will be the consummation of the greatest departure from God and defiance of God the world has ever seen. And therefore the coming judgment will also be greater.

After the beautiful parable of the abandoned child, from which we learned Jehovah's grace and mercy shown to Jerusalem, and the description of Jerusalem's idolatries and moral degradation, we find her judgment doom announced once more. In connection with this the prophet beholds the time when Sodom and her daughters and Samaria and her daughters, as well as Jerusalem and her daughters, will return to their former estate.

III. The Doom of Jerusalem on account of Her Wickedness.

Wherefore, O harlot, hear the word of the Lord: Thus saith the Lord God; Because thy filthiness was poured out, and thy nakedness discovered through thy whoredoms with thy lovers, and with all the idols of thy abominations, and by the blood of thy children,

which thou didst give unto them; Behold, therefore I will gather all thy lovers, with whom thou hast taken pleasure, and all them that thou hast loved, with all them that thou hast hated; I will even gather them round about against thee, and will discover thy nakedness unto them, that they may see all thy nakedness. And I will judge thee, as women that break wedlock and shed blood are judged; and I will give thee blood in fury and jealousy. And I will also give thee into their hand, and they shall throw down thine eminent place, and shall break down thy high places: they shall strip thee also of thy clothes, and shall take thy fair jewels, and leave thee naked and bare. They shall also bring up a company against thee, and they shall stone thee with stones, and thrust thee through with their swords. And they shall burn thine houses with fire, and execute judgments upon thee in the sight of many women: and I will cause thee to cease from playing the harlot, and thou also shalt give no hire any more. So will I make my fury toward thee to rest, and my jealousy shall depart from thee, and I will be quiet, and will be no more angry. Because thou hast not remembered the days of thy youth, but hast fretted me in all these things; behold, therefore I also will recompense thy way upon thine head, saith the Lord God: and thou shall not commit this lewdness above all thine abominations.

Behold, every one that useth proverbs shall use this proverb against thee, saying, As is the mother, so is her daughter. Thou art thy mother's daughter, that loatheth her husband and her children; and thou art the sister of thy sisters, which loathed their husbands and their children; your mother was an Hittite, and your father an Amorite. And thine elder sister is Samaria, she and her daughters that dwell at thy left hand: and thy younger sister, that dwelleth at thy right hand is Sodom and her daughters. Yet hast thou not walked after their ways, nor done after their abominations: but, as if that were a very little thing, thou wast corrupted more than they in all thy ways. As I live, saith the Lord God, Sodom thy sister hath not done, she nor her daughters, as thou hast done, thou and thy daughters. Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy. And they were haughty, and committed abomination before me: therefore I took them away as I saw good. Neither hath Samaria committed half of thy sins; but thou hast multiplied thine abominations more than they, and hast justified

thy sisters in all thine abominations which thou hast done. Thou also, which hast judged thy sisters, bear thine own shame for thy sins that thou hast committed more abominable than they: they are more righteous than thou: yea, be thou confounded also, and bear thy shame, in that thou hast justified thy sisters. When I shall bring again their captivity, the captivity of Sodom and her daughters, and the captivity of Samaria and her daughters, then will I bring again the captivity of thy captives in the midst of them: That thou mayest bear thine own shame, and mayest be confounded in all that thou hast done, in that thou art a comfort unto them. When thy sisters, Sodom and her daughters, shall return to their former estate, and Samaria and her daughters shall return to their former estate, then thou and thy daughters shall return to your former estate. For thy sister Sodom was not mentioned by thy mouth in the day of thy pride, Before thy wickedness was discovered, as at the time of thy reproach of the daughters of Syria, and all that are round about her, the daughters of the Philistines, which despise thee round about. Thou hast borne thy lewdness and thine abominations, saith the Lord. For thus saith the Lord God; I will even deal with thee as thou hast done, which hast despised the oath in breaking the covenant (verses 35-59).

The Word of the Lord is now addressed not to the beloved city, but to the harlot. She had committed the most awful spiritual fornication, with which she had insulted Jehovah, and utterly rejected His love and mercy. All the idols of abominations were found in her. The different nations which surrounded the land were given to the most degrading idolatries, and Jerusalem had not alone taken up this wicked idol worship, but she became worse than the heathen which practised these things. "They did after the abominations of the heathen which the Lord had cast out before the children of Israel" (2 Kings xxi:2). Graven images were set up in Jerusalem. Moloch service (sacrifice of children) became general. Sorceries and demon-cults flourished. The vilest immoralities were linked with all this false worship. Jerusalem had become a harlot in the fullest sense of the word, a sink of iniquity. And her lovers,

the nations, whose idolatries she had accepted, would now be gathered against her to be used in her judgment (verse 37). Her judgment would be "as a woman that breaks wedlock," that is, an adulteress—"and I will give thy blood in fury and jealousy" (verse 38). Stoning was the judgment for a woman who committed adultery (Lev. xx:10; John viii:5). Therefore the Lord said, "They shall also bring up a company against thee, and they shall stone thee with stones and thrust thee through with their swords" (verse 40). The judgment would be exhaustive upon her and she would be caused to cease playing the harlot—"thou shalt also give no hire any more" (verse 41). Without following the description of her doom and Jehovah's scathing condemnation in detail, we turn to that which is of much importance and interest. Samaria is mentioned and her daughters as the elder sister of Jerusalem, and Sodom and her daughters as her younger sister (verse 46). And though the corruption of Samaria and Sodom were so great, yet Jerusalem "was corrupted more than they" in all her ways. "As I live, saith the Lord God, Sodom thy sister hath not done, she nor her daughters, as thou hast done, thou and thy daughters" (verse 48). Samaria is called the elder sister, because the northern kingdom was the larger; and Sodom is called the younger, because her territory was smaller. The daughters mentioned in connection with each has reference to the allied towns of Jerusalem, Samaria and the region south of Jerusalem, where Sodom was the chief city. Then Sodom's sin is mentioned. Pride stands first (verse 49); luxurious living, and then followed abomination, and God took them away. After the sins of Samaria are briefly rehearsed we find in this chapter the following words: "When I shall bring again their captivity, the captivity of Sodom and her daughters, and the captivity of Samaria and her daughters, then will

I bring again the captivity of thy captives in the midst of them" (verse 53). And again we read: "When thy sisters, Sodom and her daughters, shall return to their former estate, and Samaria and her daughters shall return to their former estate, then thou and thy daughters shall return to your former estate" (verse 55). These two statements are used by a certain class of teachers to back up their unscriptural theory of a future restitution of the wicked dead. They say that these two passages predict a restoration of Sodom and the other wicked cities which perished in judgment by fire (Gen. xix), and also a restoration of Samaria as well as Jerusalem, and upon this they built their hope that all the wicked dead will be raised up and restored to a place of blessing. They make therefore much of a restoration of the wicked dead by resurrection.* Besides these two passages they also use the following Old Testament scriptures to confirm their theory: Eze. xxxvii:1-14; Hosea xiii:14; Jere. xlviii:47; Isa. xxv:7-8, and others. These passages are applied by these teachers to a restitution of the wicked dead by resurrection. But this is the wrong interpretation. They have nothing to do with the resurrection of the physical dead. They refer to national resurrection and restoration. Three facts will show the error of making the Old Testament teach the restoration of the wicked dead:

I. The Old Testament is not that part of the divine Revelation where teachings and doctrines about the future state are given.

This is a most important fact. The Old Testament shows man as upon the earth, on this side of death, and not beyond death. The future of Israel on the earth, their

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*Millennial Dawn, or Associated Bible Students, Restorationists, etc., do this.

supremacy and destiny of glory amidst the nations of the earth, the judgments of God in the earth, as well as the future blessings for the nations inhabiting the earth during the coming age, are all clearly revealed in the Old Testament. The state after death, that which is beyond this life, is shrouded in mystery in the Old Testament Scriptures. That great judgment, the great white throne judgment, is nowhere mentioned in the Old Testament, nor do we read a word there of "the second death." Resurrection of the dead, no doubt, was known to individual saints of Old Testament times; the Spirit of God revealed it to their hearts, but as a doctrine, resurrection is not found in the Old Testament. In Psalm xvi is revealed the hope of resurrection of the body, and there is a prophecy of the resurrection of our Lord.

II. Should we find anything in the Old Testament concerning the future state, the state of the righteous and the unrighteous after death, such a hint or statement can only be rightly understood and interpreted by the great doctrine concerning the future state as revealed in the New Testament.

By this, of course, we do not say that the Old Testament needs correction by the revelation of the New, nor do we say that the Old is inferior to the New; all *is* the Word of God. However, as the Old Testament does not show man's condition after death, any passage which appears to relate to such a condition must be interpreted by the full light as given in the New Testament.

III. If such passages as Ezekiel xvi:53 *and Ezekiel xxxvii*:1-14, *etc., teach the restitution of the wicked by resurrection for another chance, we must then find such a doctrine of the restoration of the wicked dead for another chance to accept salvation most clearly and fully revealed as one of the great doctrines of the New Testament.*

In vain, however, do we look in the New Testament for

such a restoration—second probation doctrine. Such a doctrine is not even hinted at in the New. However, the New Testament gives the fullest revelation concerning resurrection and the future state. It tells us that there is indeed a resurrection of the body for every human being. This revelation of resurrection as contained in the New Testament leaves no room whatever for the Sodomites and all the wicked idolatrous Israelites, to be raised up for another chance. Our Lord in John v:29 reveals a two-fold resurrection, a resurrection unto life and a resurrection unto damnation. The human race, those who have died, are therefore in resurrection divided into two classes: they must come forth either unto life or unto damnation; there is no middle class. Later the New Testament teaches a first resurrection, an out resurrection from the dead. Only those who have believed and died in Christ will have a share in this resurrection. Both Old and New Testament saints belong to it, but none have a part in it who died in their sins. The rest of the dead, meaning of course, the wicked dead, are not raised up till after the thousand years. This is a second resurrection and this takes place not when the Lord comes the second time, but after His millennial reign (Rev. xx). The subjects of this second resurrection appears before the great white throne and are cast into the lake of fire. Now, these teachers claim that the return of Sodom and Samaria to their former estate means their resurrection for another chance when the Lord comes. But as these departed wicked people are wicked still, how can they have part in the first resurrection when the Lord comes, which is the resurrection of the righteous?

They surely cannot belong to this resurrection. And there is nowhere in the New Testament a word about another special resurrection in which all the wicked are raised from the dead for another chance. After the resurrec-

tion of the righteous dead there is but one more resurrection, the resurrection of the wicked unto damnation. In the light of these facts the flimsy theory built upon misapplied texts of the Old Testament, texts which relate to national restoration and blessing, breaks down completely. And now having seen what the statements in this chapter of Ezekiel do not mean, let us see what is their meaning. While these statements cannot mean the resurrection of individuals, they mean a *national* restoration. There is promised in many passages of the Old Testament a national restoration of Israel. The ten tribes are to be brought back to their former possessions. Historically they have been lost.* But they are not lost to God. He knows where they are. He has kept track of them, and in His own time He will make good the promises of their restoration and will bring back the remnants of the house of Israel, now scattered still among the nations. The Jews will also be restored to their territory. Repeatedly this national restoration of the ancient people is promised under the picture of a resurrection. But to other nations there is also promised such a national restoration in the days to come, when the Lord comes and begins His Kingdom reign over the earth. Such a national revival is beyond a doubt promised for a future day to Moab, Ammon, Assyria and Egypt. Edom and Babylon, however, are doomed as nations and no revival whatever is promised to them.

We do not know of course how God will accomplish these promises of restoration and national revivals, and how He will gather the remnants of these former nations from the great sea of nations. We can leave this and other difficulties with Him who will see to the fulfillment of all these things.

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*The so-called Anglo-Israel theory lacks all Scriptural and historical support.

And so there is promised not alone a return of Samaria to her former estate, but also to Sodom and the cities which were wiped out by judgment. Here is the difficulty which is used to prove that a literal resurrection of the wicked Sodomites must be meant. Were they not all totally destroyed? How then can there be a national restoration when they all perished? But while it is true that all who were in Sodom and the other cities perished, we do not know how many of the inhabitants of these prosperous cities, thickly populated, no doubt, happened to be away from home, on journeys or outside of the doomed district, and thus escaped the fate of others. God knows all this and keeps track of all. There is certainly promised a healing for the territory occupied by Sodom and her sister cities. The vision of the stream issuing from the temple (Ex. xlvii) is seen emptying into the sea, which is the Dead Sea, "and the waters shall be healed and everything shall live whithersoever the river cometh." See also Zechariah xiv:8. And what else it may mean we do not know. But of one thing we can be assured, it does *not* mean the resurrection of the wicked Sodomites for a second chance, for we know that they are "suffering the vengeance of eternal fire" (Jude 7).

IV. The Covenant Remembered and Established.

The closing paragraph of this interesting chapter is the divine assurance that the covenant made in the days of Israel's youth is to be remembered.

> Nevertheless I will remember my covenant with thee in the days of thy youth, and I will establish unto thee an everlasting covenant, Then thou shalt remember thy ways, and be ashamed, when thou shalt receive thy sisters, thine elder and thy younger: and I will give them unto thee for daughters, but not by thy covenant. And I will establish my covenant with thee; and thou shalt know that I am the Lord; that thou mayest remember and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more because of thy shame, when I am pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God (verses 60-63).

The covenant will be remembered and established as an everlasting covenant. Then Jerusalem will receive the elder and younger sister, Samaria and Sodom, not as sisters, but as daughters. They will be added in the coming days of blessing to Jerusalem. This, however, will not be done "by thy covenant," which means the law covenant but by "His covenant," the covenant of promise and of grace (xvi:8). "And I will establish my covenant with thee, and thou shalt know that I am the Lord." Of this great restoration and blessing in store for Jerusalem we shall hear much in the closing visions of Ezekiel.

THE PARABLE OF THE TWO EAGLES. THE CEDAR AND THE VINE.

Chapter xvii.

The Prophet is once more commanded to speak in a parable to the house of Israel. In this parable there is again portrayed the sin of Jerusalem, and the treacherous character of corrupt Zedekiah. Like the sixteenth chapter it ends with another restoration promise, which will find its future fulfilment when God in sovereign grace exalts the branch of David. This will take place when Messiah will be King and rules in righteousness.

I. The Parable of the Two Eagles.

And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, put forth a riddle, and speak a parable unto the house of Israel: And say, Thus saith the Lord God; A great eagle with great wings, long-winged, full of feathers, which had divers colors, came unto Lebanon, and took the highest branch of the cedar: He cropped off the top of his young twigs, and carried it into a land of traffick; he set it in a city of merchants. He took also of the seed of the land, and planted it in a fruitful field; he placed it by great waters, and set it as a willow tree. And it grew, and became a spreading vine of low stature, whose branches turned toward him, and the roots

thereof were under him: so it became a vine, and brought forth branches, and shot forth sprigs. There was also another great eagle with great wings and many feathers: and behold, this vine did bend her roots toward him, and shot forth her branches toward him that he might water it by the furrows of her plantation. It was planted in a good soil by great waters, that it might bring forth branches, and that it might bear fruit, that it might be a goodly vine. Say thou, Thus saith the Lord God; Shall it prosper? shall he not pull up the roots thereof, and cut off the fruit thereof, that it wither? It shall wither in all the leaves of her spring, even without great power or many people to pluck it up by the roots thereof. Yea, behold, being planted, shall it prosper? shall it not utterly wither, when the east wind toucheth it? It shall wither in the furrows where it grew (verses 1-10).

The great eagle mentioned first is Nebuchadnezzar, the King of Babylon. "For thus saith the Lord: Behold he shall fly as an eagle, and shall spread his wings over Moab" (Jer. xlviii:40). "Behold, he shall come up and fly as the eagle, and spread his wings over Bozrah" (Jer. xlix:22). When Daniel saw the Babylonian Empire rising out of the sea it was in the form of a lion with eagles' wings (Daniel vii:1-2). Nebuchadnezzar had been constituted by God the first great monarch of the times of the Gentiles after the complete apostasy of Israel. Thus Jeremiah had announced it (Jer. xxvii:5, etc.), and Daniel also told the King, "Thou, O King, art a King of Kings, for the God of heaven hath given thee a Kingdom, power, and strength and glory" (Dan. ii:37). Ezekiel's parable describes him as a great eagle with great wings and long-winged, denoting his great power and the vast dominion which belonged to him. "Full of feathers" pictures the multitude of his subjects and the "divers colors" the different nations of his empire.

This eagle, Nebuchadnezzar, came to Lebanon and took the highest branch of the cedar. He cropped off the top of his young twigs, and carried it into a land of traffic; he set it in a city of merchants. The cedar of Lebanon is the

symbol of the royal house of David, which was conquered by the eagle. The top of his young twigs, whom Nebuchadnezzar cropped off and carried into the city of merchants, Babylon, describes Jehoiakim and his captivity (2 Kings xxiv:1-5; 2 Chron. xxxvi:6-7). Then Nebuchadnezzar made Mattaniah, the youngest son of Josiah, King over Judah, and changed his name to Zedekiah. This action of the King of Babylon is described in verse 5. And Zedekiah might have done well if he had held to the King who had set him into the place of authority. He was placed like a willow tree besides great waters, so that he became a spreading vine of low stature; his roots were under him, which means, he was dependent upon Nebuchadnezzar (2 Kings xxiv:17). The other great eagle, whom Ezekiel mentions in his parable, is Hophra, the King of Egypt. To this king Zedekiah turned for help: "This vine bent her roots towards him." Zedekiah rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar. Verse 8 describes the opportunity which had been given to Zedekiah and verses 9-10 announces his judgment. The sin and treacherous dealings of Zedekiah is shown in the next verses.

II. The Interpretation and Application of the Parable.

Moreover the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Say now to the rebellious house, Know ye not what these things mean? tell them, Behold, the king of Babylon is come to Jerusalem, and hath taken the king thereof, and the princes thereof, and led them with him to Babylon; and hath taken of the king's seed, and made a covenant with him, and hath taken an oath of him: he hath also taken the mighty of the land. That the kingdom might be base, that it might not lift itself up, but that by keeping of his covenant it might stand. But he rebelled against him in sending his ambassadors into Egypt, that they might give him horses and much people. Shall he prosper? shall he escape that doeth such things? or shall he break the covenant and be delivered? As I live, saith the Lord God, surely in the place where the king dwelleth that made him king, whose oath he despised, and whose covenant he brake, even with him in the midst of Babylon he shall die. Neither

shall Pharoah with his mighty army and great company make for him in the war, by casting up mounts and building forts, to cut off many persons. Seeing he despised the oath by breaking the covenant, when, lo, he had given his hand, and hath done all these things he shall not escape. Therefore, thus saith the Lord God; As I live, surely mine oath that he hath despised, and my covenant that he hath broken, even it will I recompense upon his own head. And I will spread my net upon him, and he shall be taken in my snare, and I will bring him to Babylon, and will plead with him there for his trespass that he hath trespassed against me. And all his fugitives with all his bands shall fall by the sword, and they that remain shall be scattered toward all winds: and ye shall know that I the Lord have spoken it (verses 11-21).

We have next the divine interpretation and application of this parable. After the statement that the great eagle, the King of Babylon, had come to Jerusalem and taken the King and the princes captive, Zedekiah is mentioned. Nebuchadnezzar had made him King and had made a covenant with him and had taken an oath of him. Nebuchadnezzar had made him swear by God (2 Chron. xxxvi:13). Nebuchadnezzar had entered into a solemn covenant with Zedekiah and the name of God was used to make that covenant binding. Then Zedekiah, who had less regard for the name of God than Nebuchadnezzar, rebelled. Ambassadors from Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre and Sidon, came to Jerusalem to see King Zedekiah (Jere. xxvii:1-2). A combined revolution was evidently contemplated. He also sent ambassadors to Egypt. He expected great help from Pharaoh, who was a grandson of Necho, named Hophra. He advanced through Phoenicia and obliged the Chaldean army to abandon the siege of Jerusalem (Jere. xxxvii:5-7). The joy over this event in Jerusalem was great, for the wicked, treacherous King Zedekiah expected that the Egyptian army would be the deliverer. But the relief was of a short duration. The Egyptian army had to retire and the Chaldeans resumed the siege. His great sin was that he had despised the oath

and broken the covenant. Ezekiel announced therefore in the name of Jehovah his coming doom. "Therefore thus saith the Lord God; as I live, surely mine oath that he hath despised, and my covenant that he hath broken, even it will I recompense upon his own head. And I will spread my net upon him, and he shall be taken in my snare, and I will bring him to Babylon, and will plead with him there for his trespass that he hath trespassed against me." He tried to escape from Jerusalem, but he and his household were taken captives and carried to the headquarters of Nebuchadnezzar at Riblah. Zedekiah was arraigned and sentenced. His daughters were set free, while his sons were slain before him. This was the last thing the oath-despising, covenant-breaking Zedekiah saw. His eyes were put out and he was bound with double fetters of brass and carried to Babylon, where he died a prisoner (Jere. lii:11). He had despised the name of Jehovah and brought dishonor upon the name by violating the covenant with Nebuchadnezzar. The Gentile King had a higher esteem of that Name than the Jewish King. And then Jehovah in His righteous dealings used the Gentile to mete out the well-deserved retribution upon Zedekiah. Thus the Gentile King was used in punishing a faithless Jew. It foreshadows the judgment which came upon the whole nation when they despised and rejected more than a covenant. Ever since they rejected their own Messiah and King, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Gentiles have trodden down Jerusalem and the nation is blinded.

III. The Promise of the Future.

Thus saith the Lord God; I will also take of the highest branch of the high cedar, and will set it; I will crop off from the top of his young twigs a tender one, and will plant it upon an high mountain and eminent: In the mountain of the height of Israel will I plant it: and it shall bring forth boughs, and bear fruit, and be a goodly cedar: and under it shall dwell all fowl of every wing; in the shadow

of the branches thereof shall they dwell. And all the trees of the field shall know that I, the Lord, have brought down the high tree, have exalted the low tree, have dried up the green tree, and have made the dry tree to flourish: I the Lord have spoken and have done it (verses 22-24).

And now once more Israel's hope and Israel's future comes into view. The allegory of the parable is continued. The cedar is the royal house of David. God in His Sovereignty promises to take "of its young shoots a tender one and I will plant it upon a high and eminent mountain." This tender one is the Messiah, the Son of David. It is the same promise as given in the Prophet Isaiah. "And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots" (Isa. xi:1). "For He shall grow up before him as a tender plant and as a root out of a dry ground" (Isa. liii:2). The high and eminent mountain typifies Mount Zion and the Kingdom of Messiah is pictured in the closing verses of the chapter. The high tree which is brought low, the green tree which is dried up is the symbol of Gentile world-power. The low tree which is exalted and the dry tree which is made to flourish stands for the restoration of the Kingdom to Israel when the Son of David, our Lord, comes again. Then the high tree will be cut down and the now flourishing Gentile dominion will dry up; Israel the low tree will be exalted and the long, dry and barren nation will bring its blessed fruit.

GOD'S JUDGMENTS ARE RIGHTEOUS.

Chapter xviii.

Again the Word of the Lord came unto the Prophet. The contents of this chapter are, therefore, not "the reasonings and expostulations of Ezekiel," but another great message to the stubborn nation, which constantly tried to justify itself. Judgments heavy and severe had come

upon them. Instead of bowing under them and confessing their guilt and the justice of all these punitive dealings of a righteous God, they accused Him of injustice, as if He were punishing them, not for their own sins, but for the sins of their fathers. They said, "the way of the Lord is not equal"; and the Lord proves to them that His way is equal, but their way is unequal (verse 25). It is a great and interesting controversy, ending with the sublime declaration and appeal, "I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God, wherefore turn yourselves and live."

I. The False Accusation and the Divine Answer.

The word of the Lord came unto me again, saying. What mean ye, that ye use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying, The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge. As I live, saith the Lord God, ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel. Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die (verses 1-4).

The same proverb, "the fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge" is also mentioned by the Prophet Jeremiah. "In those days they shall say no more, the fathers have eaten sour grapes, his teeth shall be set on edge" (Jer. xxxi:29). And Jeremiah adds in a brief sentence what is more fully given through Ezekiel: "But every one shall die for his own iniquity; every man that eateth the sour grape, his teeth shall be set on edge." What they meant by this proverb is that their forefathers had committed sin and now they were bearing the results of their iniquities, while they, the children, were innocent. "Our fathers have sinned and are not; and we have borne their iniquities" (Lam. v:7). This was a false and unjust accusation. No doubt they rested their proverb upon Exodus xx:5 and xxxiv:7. But doing this they denied.

their own guilt and refused to repent and be converted. And now the Lord answers the proverb to show its injustice so that it should no more be used in Israel: "Behold all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine; the soul that sinneth it shall die." He will judge the individual, father or son, according to conduct. All belong to Him, which means, He is the Creator of all and He will deal with each individually. If the sins of the fathers come upon the children, it is because the children follow the wickedness of the fathers. "Every man shall be put to death for his own sin" (Deut. xxiv:16). The person that sins shall die for his own sins. "The soul that sinneth it shall die."

II. The Conditions of Life.

> But if a man be just, and do that which is lawful and right. And hath not eaten upon the mountains, neither hath lifted up his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel, neither hath defiled his neighbor's wife, neither hath come near to a woman in her separation. And hath not oppressed any, but hath restored to the debtor his pledge, hath spoiled none by violence, hath given his bread to the hungry, and hath covered the naked with a garment: He that hath not given forth upon usury, neither hath taken any increase, that hath withdrawn his hand from iniquity, hath executed true judgment between man and man. Hath walked in my statutes, and hath kept my judgments, to deal truly; he is just, he shall surely live, saith the Lord God (verses 5-9).

This paragraph and the next two begin with an "if." They are, therefore, supposed cases "if a man be just." It shows what God requires as the conditions for life. However, it must be understood that the promise of life, "he shall surely live," has nothing whatever to do with eternal life. This is not at all in view in these paragraphs. It is the natural life. Eternal life was never promised to be bestowed upon man as the result of doing what is lawful and right. Neither righteousness nor eternal life can come by

the works of the law. Here negatively and positively God's demands are stated. In the sixth verse false worship is in view. Eating upon the mountains, the high places, was the false worship; the idols of the house of Israel were the calves which Jeroboam had set up (1 Kings xii:25-33). This demand for true worship covers the first part of the decalogue, "Thou shalt have no other gods besides Me." With this spiritual fornication, an idolatrous worship, there was connected the grossest lusts of the flesh. These are mentioned here as well as sins against the neighbor. Thus the commandments in the second part of the decalogue are made prominent. "Thou shalt not kill," "Thou shalt not commit adultery," "Thou shalt not steal." This is followed by the divine demand of practical righteousness. He that hath withdrawn his hand from iniquity hath executed true judgment between man and man, hath walked in God's statutes, to keep His judgments and deals truly, is pronounced just and shall therefore surely live. His life would be spared.

III. The Conditions which bring Death.

> If he beget a son that is a robber, a shedder of blood, and that doeth the like to any one of these things. And that doeth not any of those duties, but even hath eaten upon the mountains, and defiled his neighbor's wife, Hath oppressed the poor and needy, hath spoiled by violence, hath not restored the pledge, and hath lifted up his eyes to the idols, hath committed abomination, Hath given forth upon usury, and hath taken increase: shall he then live? he shall not live: he hath done all these abominations; he shall surely die; his blood shall be upon him (verses 10-13).

Here then is the second supposed case of a son who had a righteous father. This son lives in wickedness and defies God's laws. He does not follow his father's piety, but is unjust in every sense of the word. The question then is asked, "Shall he live?" Can the merits of his father save

him? And the divine answer is, "He shall not live—he shall surely die." Physical death would come upon him and he would be cut off in judgment.

IV. The Son does not Die for his Father's Sins.

Now, lo, if he beget a son, that seeth all his father's sins, which he hath done, and considereth, and doeth not such like. That hath not eaten upon the mountains, neither hath lifted up his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel, hath not defiled his neighbour's wife. Neither hath oppressed any, hath not withholden the pledge, neither hath spoiled by violence, but hath given his bread to the hungry, and hath covered the naked with a garment. That hath taken off his hand from the poor, that hath not received usury nor increase, hath executed my judgments, hath walked in my statutes; he shall not die for the iniquity of his father, he shall surely live. As for his father, because he cruelly oppressed, spoiled his brother by violence, and did that which is not good among his people, lo, even he shall die in his iniquity. Yet say ye, Why? doth not the son bear the iniquity of the father? When the son hath done that which is lawful and right, and hath kept all my statutes, and hath done them, he shall surely live. The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him (verses 14-20).

Still another case is considered so that the proverb of the people might be completely answered and refuted. A wicked father has a son who does righteously and follows not in the wicked ways of his father. Such was the case with several Kings of Judah. Ahaz was a wicked man and Hezekiah, his son, was a God-fearing king; Josiah was also the pious son of a wicked father. In such a case "the son shall not die for the iniquity of his father; he shall surely live." The father dies on account of his own iniquity. This statement was in answer to their question, "Why does not the son bear the iniquity of the father?" This foolish reasoning from their side that the son could suffer for the father's sin was a wicked invention to sustain them in their

impenitent state and in their sins. They claimed no guilt of their own, but charged their sufferings to the wickedness of the fathers. But we have seen how perfectly the proverb "the fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge," is answered in these paragraphs.

V. The Perfect Equity of God.

But if the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die. All his transgressions that he hath committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him: in his righteousness that he hath done he shall live. Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord God: and not that he should return from his ways, and live? But when the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doeth, shall he live? All his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned: in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die. Yet ye say, The way of the Lord is not equal. Hear now, O house of Israel; Is not my way equal? are not your ways unequal? When a righteous man turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and dieth in them: for his iniquity that he hath done shall he die. Again, when the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive. Because he considereth, and turneth away from all his transgressions that he hath committed, he shall surely live, he shall not die. Yet saith the house of Israel, The way of the Lord is not equal. O house of Israel, are not my ways equal? are not your ways unequal? Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, saith the Lord God, Repent and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin. Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye (verses 21-32).

They had accused the Lord of injustice. "The way of the

Lord is not equal" (verse 25). And Jehovah answers, "Hear now, O house of Israel; Is not my way equal? are not your ways unequal?" He promises that the wicked is surely to live, if he turns from all his sins. Jehovah has no pleasure in the death of the wicked. He desires his return so that he might live. How then would He punish them for the sins of others, if He was ready no longer to mention even their own transgressions? But if the righteous abandons righteousness and committeth iniquity, then "in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die." The latter case has often been used to defend the teaching that a truly converted and therefore saved person, may, by sinning, be lost. If only the Word of Truth were rightly divided such, and other misinterpretations, would cease. Here we are on the ground of the law dispensation, and, as already pointed out, the Lord answers Israel, who were in relation to Him through the law covenant and who refused to own their sins and their guilt. The dispensation of Grace, in which Grace reigns through righteousness has a different message. This is fully illustrated if we compare the call to repentance in verses 30-31 with the promise given in chapter xxxvi:26-27. The Lord pleads with them to acknowledge their sinfulness; He speaks to their conscience. "Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions, so iniquity shall not be your ruin. Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed, and make you a new heart and a new spirit; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" But in chapter xxxvi Grace speaks and promises to bestow, as a gift, what a righteous God demands. "A new heart also will I give you and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them." The result of this

gift of grace, a new heart and His Spirit, is true repentance. "*Then* shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations" (chap. xxxvi:21). It was Augustine who said, "Give what Thou requirest and then require what Thou will." All what God requires He bestows in His infinite Grace through Jesus Christ our Lord and then in possession of what Grace gives we can be what God requires. But the thirty-sixth chapter, where God no longer saith "make you a new heart," but promises to give a new heart to His people, awaits, as regards God's chosen people, its fulfilment. Here God pleads with them to convince them that they were a sinful people and that He is a just God.

In the last verse of this chapter the Lord answers the question of verse 23, "Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die?" His own answer is, "For I have no pleasure in the death of Him that dieth, saith the Lord God, wherefore turn yourselves and live." And yet all these gracious pleadings were not heeded.

LAMENTATION OVER THE PRINCES OF ISRAEL.

Chapter xix.

This chapter ends that section of the book which began with the twelfth chapter. And it is a fitting conclusion, this great lamentation over the Princes of Israel, and over the land of Judah. The English translation does not do justice to the original Hebrew; the outburst of lamentation is written in a poetic form, some kind of an elegy. The lamentation has two sections.

I. The Lamentations over the Princes of Israel.

Moreover take thou up a lamentation for the princes of Israel. And say, What is thy mother? A lioness: she lay down among

lions, she nourished her whelps among young lions. And she brought up one of her whelps: it became a young lion, and it learned to catch the prey; it devoured men. The nations also heard of him; he was taken in their pit, and they brought him with chains unto the land of Egypt. Now when she saw that she had waited, and her hope was lost, then she took another of her whelps, and made him a young lion. And he went up and down among the lions, he became a young lion, and learned to catch the prey, and devoured men. And he knew their desolate palaces, and he laid waste their cities; and the land was desolate, and the fulness thereof, by the noise of his roaring. Then the nations set against him on every side from the provinces, and spread their net over him: he was taken in their pit. And they put him in ward in chains, and brought him to the king of Babylon: they brought him into holds, that his voice should no more be heard upon the mountains of Israel (verses 1-9).

The lamentation is not the lamentation of Ezekiel, as so many expositors state, but it is the lamentation of Jehovah, the same who later wept over the same city and lamented over her coming fate. The words of divine lament were put into the mouth of the Prophet.

The Princes are Jehoahaz and Jehoachin. King Jehoahaz and his fate, being carried away captive into Egypt (2 Kings xxiii:33) is lamented in verses 1-4. King Jehoiachin who was taken as a captive to Babylon is lamented in verses 5-9. In Ezekiel, however, the word King is not used; the Kings are always called princes. The second verse may be rendered as follows:

> Thy mother was like a lioness, among lions.
> "She couched amid the young lions, she reared the whelps."

The mother is Judah. Of this Jacob had spoken in his prophecy. "Judah is a lion's whelp" (Gen. xlix:9). And Balaam in his prophetic utterances speaks in the same tones of the nation. "Behold, the people shall rise up as a great lion, and lift up himself as a young lion" (Num. xxiv:14). This prophecy will be fulfilled in the future when He appears

in power and glory to receive the Kingdom, for He is called "the lion of the tribe of Judah" (Rev. v:5). And the people will then be as a converted and restored people the same, what the lion is among the animals, the Kingly nation. In Isaiah xxix:1 Jerusalem is called "Ariel," which means "Lion of God." The whelps, the nations heard of, are the sons of the House of David. And Jehoahaz "devoured men" and did evil in the sight of the Lord and was carried away by Pharaoh Necho as a captive into Egypt. Some expositors think that the lioness is the wife of Josiah the mother of Jehoahaz, because she was a woman of much importance and great influence (Jer. xiii:18; 2 Kings ii:9; xxiv:12).

The other one of her whelps mentioned in verse 5, whom the lioness, Judah, made a young lion, that is a King, was Jehoiachin. Jehoiachin was made King, when all hope of a return of Jehoahaz was lost, and the new King also "devoured men," did evil in the sight of the Lord. "And he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his fathers had done" (2 Kings xxiv:90). In verse 7 the word "palaces" should be changed to "widows." The verse describes the cruelties and wicked deeds of the King. Then judgment overtook him. Under him the first deportation to Babylon took place, in which the Prophet Ezekiel was included. "And he (Nebuchadnezzar) carried away Jehoiachin to Babylon, and the King's mother, and the King's wife, and his officers, and the mighty of the land, those carried he into captivity from Jerusalem to Babylon" (2 Kings xxiv:14). The correct rendering of the next part of verse 9 is: "And they put him in a cage with hooks and brought him to the King of Babylon." Both Kings deserved their fate. God had warned, and as they continued in wickedness judgment fell upon them. And it was a warning to Zedekiah who was soon to share the same fate. In view of the violence which is on the earth now, the wickedness which is seen on all sides,

these judgments of the past may well be remembered. God is the same today as He was of old. He must deal in judgment with sin; in many parts of the holy Scriptures we read of the time when God will keep not silence, but deal with conditions on the earth according to His righteousness.

II. The Lamentation over the Land of Judah.

> Thy mother is like a vine in thy blood, planted by the waters; she was fruitful and full of branches by reason of many waters. And she had strong rods for the sceptres of them that bare rule, and her stature was exalted among the thick branches, and she appeared in her height with the multitude of her branches. But she was plucked up in fury, she was cast down to the ground, and the east wind dried up her fruit; her strong rods were broken and withered; the fire consumed them. And now she is planted in the wilderness, in a dry and thirsty ground. And fire is gone out of a rod of her branches, which hath devoured her fruit, so that she hath no strong rod to be a sceptre to rule. This is a lamentation, and shall be for a lamentation (verses 10-14).

Judah typified by a vine is not a new figure in Ezekiel. See chapters xv:1-5; xvii:6-10. The statement here reminds us also of Psalm lxxx:8-11. Many were the blessings Judah enjoyed, like a vine planted by the waters, fruitful and full of branches. The eleventh verse describes the period of Judah's greatest prosperity under David and Solomon. Then the judgment which comes upon the land, the east wind is typical of the Chaldeans which swept from the East and spoiled the vine. The fire of divine wrath burned in their midst. Her exilic judgment is pictured in the next verse: "And now she is planted in the wilderness, in a dry and thirsty land." And the fire of judgment came out of a rod of her branches, that is, the judgment came upon them on account of their wicked Kings. Thus ends the sorrowful lamentation over the princes and the land of Judah. But there is a better future in store for the land and the people, a future which can only be realized in Him, who said, "I am

the true vine." Israel still is under the rod, but in God's own time the curse will give way to the promised blessing, for God's gifts and calling are without repentance.

FURTHER AND FINAL PREDICTIONS CONCERNING THE JUDGMENT OF JERUSALEM.

Chapter xx.

With this chapter we enter upon the last prophecies given through the prophet before the fall of the City of Jerusalem. There is first an arraignment of the unfaithful nation. This is followed by the divine announcement that the sword of the Lord is now to be drawn to do its judgment work. The twenty-first chapter, in which this announcement is made, has been called the sword-song. In chapter xxii another arraignment of the people and the sins of Jerusalem is given and the corruption of all classes, prophets, priests, princes and the mass of people is described. Once more in chapter xxiii the wickedness and vileness of Samaria and Judah is uncovered, corresponding to the similar message in chapter xvi. The last prophetic message of this cycle was given on the day when the siege of Jerusalem began. On the same day Ezekiel's wife died; the prophet was commanded not to mourn. All this has a meaning in connection with Jerusalem's complete fall. Thus God waited and waited for the repentance of His people and sent these burning messages to them till at last there was no remedy and judgment had to come.

I. A Retrospect of the Nation's Sins.

And it came to pass in the seventh year, in the fifth month, the tenth day of the month, that certain of the elders of Israel came to enquire of the Lord and sat before me. Then came the word of the Lord unto me, saying, Son of man, speak unto the elders of Israel, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; Are ye come to en-

quire of me? As I live, saith the Lord God, I will not be enquired of by you. Wilt thou judge them, son of man, wilt thou judge them? cause them to know the abominations of their fathers: And say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; In the day when I chose Israel, and lifted up mine hand unto the seed of the house of Jacob, and made myself known unto them in the land of Egypt, when I lifted up mine hand unto them, saying, I am the Lord your God; In the day that I lifted up mine hand unto them to bring them forth of the land of Egypt into a land that I had espied for them, flowing with milk and honey, which is the glory of all lands; Then said I unto them, Cast ye away every man the abomination of his eyes, and defile not yourselves with the idols of Egypt: I am the Lord your God. But they rebelled against me, and would not hearken unto me: they did not every man cast away the abominations of their eyes, neither did they forsake the idols of Egypt: then I said, I will pour out my fury upon them, to accomplish my anger against them in the midst of the land of Egypt. But I wrought for my name's sake, that it should not be polluted before the heathen, among whom they were, in whose sight I made myself known unto them, in bringing them forth out of the land of Egypt (verses 1-9).

There is first a review of the nation's sin in Egypt. At the time given in the first verse the elders came to the prophet to enquire of the Lord. Outwardly it seemed as if these enquiring elders were sincere and came in the spirit of humility acknowledging the prophet's authority. But the Lord knoweth the heart; He read their innermost thoughts and knew that their inquiry was only a sham; the real heart exercise in true repentance was lacking. So He tells them through the prophet, "As I live—I will not be inquired of by you. Wilt thou judge them, son of man, wilt thou judge them? Cause them to know the abominations of their fathers." Instead of giving them a message of comfort and encouragement, Ezekiel, here addressed again as son of man, is commanded to judge them, that is to put before them their sins and to pronounce judgment upon the nation. The same phrase is found twice more in this section. "Now, thou son of man, wilt thou judge,

wilt thou judge the bloody city? Yea thou shalt show her all her abominations" (xxii:2). See also xxiii:36. And first of all the prophet had to show them the nation's sins in Egypt. He had chosen them as a nation; He had made Himself known to them in Egypt and had lifted up His hand unto them saying, "I am the Lord your God." He had entered into covenant relations with Israel and pledged Himself to bring them out of Egypt into the land, which here is called "the glory of all lands." From verses 7 and 8 we learn that Israel was contaminated by the idol worship of Egypt and a holy God was ready to pour upon them His fury in the midst of the land of Egypt. But sovereign mercy prevailed and instead of making Himself known to the nation in judgment, He made Himself known in bringing them forth out of Egypt.

> Wherefore I caused them to go forth out of the land of Egypt, and brought them into the wilderness. And I gave them my statutes, and showed them my judgments, which if a man do, he shall even live in them. Moreover also I gave them my sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the Lord that sanctify them. But the house of Israel rebelled against me in the wilderness: they walked not in my statutes, and they despised my judgments, which if a man do, he shall even live in them; and my sabbaths they greatly polluted: then I said, I would pour out my fury upon them in the wilderness, to consume them. But I wrought for my name's sake, that it should not be polluted before the heathen, in whose sight I brought them out. Yet also I lifted up my hand unto them in the wilderness, that I would not bring them into the land which I had given them, flowing with milk and honey, which is the glory of all lands. Because they despised my judgments, and walked not in my statutes, but polluted my sabbaths: for their heart went after their idols. Nevertheless mine eye spared them from destroying them, neither did I make an end of them in the wilderness (verses 10-17).

In these verses we have the history of the first generation in the wilderness. His hand brought them out of the land

of Egypt into the wilderness and there He gave them the law and the different sabbaths, the feasts of Jehovah. Their sins and failures in the wilderness are briefly sketched. They rebelled; they were disobedient; they despised His judgments and polluted His sabbaths. Then comes the statement that this first generation was not to enter into the land promised unto them. Again in sovereign mercy He spared them and did not make a complete end of them in the wilderness.

> But I said unto their children in the wilderness, Walk ye not in the statutes of your fathers, neither observe their judgments, nor defile yourselves with their idols: I am the Lord your God; walk in my statutes, and keep my judgments, and do them; And hallow my sabbaths; and they shall be a sign between me and you, that ye may know that I am the Lord your God. Notwithstanding the children rebelled against me: they walked not in my statutes, neither kept my judgments to do them, which if a man do, he shall even live in them; they polluted my sabbaths: then I said, I would pour out my fury upon them, to accomplish my anger against them in the wilderness. Nevertheless I withdrew mine hand, and wrought for my name's sake, that it should not be polluted in the sight of the heathen, in whose sight I brought them forth. I lifted up mine hand unto them also in the wilderness, that I would scatter them among the heathen, and disperse them through the countries; Because they had not executed my judgments, but had despised my statutes, and had polluted my sabbaths, and their eyes were after their fathers' idols. Wherefore I gave them also statutes that were not good, and judgments whereby they should not live; And I polluted them in their own gifts, in that they caused to pass through the fire all that openeth the womb, that I might make them desolate, to the end that they might know that I am the Lord (verses 18-26).

And now the record of the second generation in the wilderness is brought to their notice. They were just as rebellious as their fathers, who fell in the wilderness. They also were worshippers of idols in the wilderness, besides offering sacrifices and offerings unto Jehovah (Amos v:25-27).

The statement in verse 25 "wherefore I gave them also statutes that were not good, and judgments whereby they should not live," has been explained in different ways. It cannot mean the law, for that is holy, just and good. "The solution is due to the simple principle that God in His government chastens His guilty people retributively and calls the scourges His own, even when the instruments may be wholly foreign to His mind and heart." They were disobedient to His statutes and then in punishment for their sins He let them go into the terrible worship of Moloch, in casting their first-born into the fire as a sacrifice to the idol-god. It is the same principle here as in Romans 1:26-28. God gave them up in every way after they had turned away from Him. It was a punishment for their sins.

II. Their Sins in the Land.

Therefore, son of man, speak unto the house of Israel, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God: Yet in this your fathers have blasphemed me, in that they have committed a trespass against me. For when I had brought them into the land, for the which I lifted up mine hand to give it to them, then they saw every high hill, and all the thick trees, and they offered there their sacrifices, and there they presented the provocation of their offering: there also they made their sweet savour, and poured out there their drink offerings. Then I said unto them, What is the high place whereunto ye go? And the name thereof is called Bamah unto this day. Wherefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord God; Are ye polluted after the manner of your fathers? and commit ye whoredom after their abominations? For when ye offer your gifts, when ye make your sons to pass through the fire, ye pollute yourselves with all your idols, even unto this day: and shall I be enquired of by you, O house of Israel? As I live, saith the Lord God, I will not be enquired of by you. And that which cometh into your mind shall not be at all, that ye say, We will be as the heathen, as the families of the countries, to serve wood and stone (verses 27-32).

According to His promise He brought them into the land.

He did not go back on His Word, in spite of their failure, for God's gifts and calling are without repentance. And thus they continued in their evil ways, committing all manner of abominations. And therefore the Lord said to the inquiring elders, "And shall I be enquired of by you, O house of Israel? As I live, saith the Lord God, I will not be enquired of by you." Verse 32 shows that in the iniquity of their heart they wanted to be like the heathen to serve wood and stone; but God would take care that this should not be, for He had chosen them to be His nation.

III. Judgment and Mercy in Future Restoration.

As I live, saith the Lord God, surely with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out, will I rule over you. And I will bring you out from the people, and will gather you out of the countries wherein ye are scattered, with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out. And I will bring you into the wilderness of the people, and there will I plead with you face to face. Like as I pleaded with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so will I plead with you, saith the Lord God. And I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant: And I will purge out from among you the rebels, and them that transgress against me: I will bring them forth out of the country where they sojourn, and they shall not enter into the land of Israel: and ye shall know that I am the Lord. As for you, O house of Israel, thus saith the Lord God; Go ye, serve ye every one his idols, and hereafter also, if ye will not hearken unto me: but pollute ye my holy name no more with your gifts, and with your idols, For in mine holy mountain, in the mountain of the height of Israel, saith the Lord God, there shall all the house of Israel, all of them in the land, serve me: there will I accept them, and there will I require your offerings, and the first fruits of your oblations, with all your holy things. I will accept you with your sweet savour, when I bring you out from the people, and gather you out of the countries wherein ye have been scattered; and I will be sanctified in you before the heathen. And ye shall know that I am the Lord, when I shall bring you into the land of Israel, into the country for the which I lifted up mine hand to give it to your fathers. And

there shall ye remember your ways, and all your doings, wherein ye have been defiled; and ye shall lothe yourselves in your own sight for all your evils that ye have committed. And ye shall know that I am the Lord, when I have wrought with you for my name's sake, not according to your wicked ways, nor according to your corrupt doings, O ye house of Israel, saith the Lord God (verses 33-44).

In this paragraph we read of their future punishment and also of the mercy which is in store for the believing remnant of the nation in the future restoration, of which all the prophets of God have spoken. In the wilderness of people, their dispersion among all the nations of the world, He will plead with them and bring them under the rod. The rebels will be purged out from the nation and they shall not enter into the land of Israel. In verses 40-44 we have a prophecy concerning their true restoration. They will be accepted, brought back and gathered out from all the countries and brought into the land of Israel, as God has promised them. Then the remnant of Israel will remember their ways and repent of their evil.

IV. The Forest Consumed by Fire.

And the word of the Lord came unto me saying, Son of man, set thy face toward the south, and drop thy word toward the south, and prophesy against the forest of the south field; And say to the forest of the south, Hear the word of the Lord; Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I will kindle a fire in thee, and it shall devour every green tree in thee, and every dry tree: the flaming flame shall not be quenched, and all faces from the south to the north shall be burned therein. And all flesh shall see that I the Lord have kindled it: it shall not be quenched. Then said I, Ah Lord God! they say of me, Doth he not speak parables (verses 45-49).

It is a parable. The forest of the south field is Judea; its complete and terrible conquest is here again predicted. The fire of judgment is to sweep through it, like a mighty forest fire which cannot be quenched. And when Ezekiel

had faithfully delivered his message, his hearers said "Doth he not speak in parables?" They refused to understand.

THE IMPENDING JUDGMENT.

Chapter xxi.

"Then said I, Oh, Lord God! they say of me, Doth he not speak in parables?" This is the last verse of the preceding chapter. It showed the hardened conditions of their hearts, which rejected the Word of God, the word of warning and the call to repentance. These sad conditions of the people in Ezekiel's day are deeply significant for our times. We see the outwardly professing people of God, the large numbers of unsaved, nominal Christians in the same hardened condition. Though God speaks loudly, the Word is not heeded. A stronger judgment message follows in which the sword of the Lord is prominent. Critics have acknowledged the majestic character of the so-called "Song of the Sword," and say that the prophet now speaks in "maddened frenzy," carried away by his own passion, breaking out, "in a state of wild excitement," denouncing the nation. But it is not the prophet who gives way to his own feeling. The first verse dispels at once such a conception. "And the Word of the Lord came unto me, saying:" It is the Lord who speaks through Ezekiel.

I. The Sword to be Drawn.

And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, set thy face toward Jerusalem, and drop thy word toward the holy places, and prophesy against the land of Israel. And say to the land of Israel, Thus saith the Lord; Behold, I am against thee, and will draw forth my sword out of his sheath, and will cut off from thee the righteous and the wicked. Seeing then that I will cut from thee the righteous and the wicked, therefore shall my sword go forth out of his sheath against all flesh from the south to the north: That all flesh may know that I the Lord have drawn forth my sword

out of his sheath: it shall not return any more. Sigh, therefore, thou son of man, with the breaking of thy loins; and with bitterness sigh before their eyes. And it shall be, when they say unto thee, Wherefore sighest thou? that thou shall answer, For the tidings, because it cometh: and every heart shall melt, and all hands shall be feeble, and every spirit shall faint, and all knees shall be weak as water: behold, it cometh, and shall be brought to pass, saith the Lord God (verses 1-7).

A fearful word it is coming from the lips of Jehovah, who had yearned over Jerusalem and the nation, "Behold, I am against thee, and will draw forth my sword out of its sheath, and will cut off from thee the righteous and the wicked." It was to be an indiscriminate execution of God's judgment, those who claimed righteousness were to fall under the sword of vengeance like the wicked. It was to be a widespread judgment. "My sword shall go forth out of its sheath against all flesh—that all flesh may know that I the Lord have drawn forth my sword out of its sheath; it shall not return any more." While here it refers to all the nations, to Jerusalem as well as to Judea, there are other prophecies which include under the term "all flesh" the Gentile nations as well. "For by fire and by His sword will the Lord plead with all flesh, and the slain of the Lord shall be many" (Isa. lxvi:16). Fear and the pit, and the snare, are upon thee, O inhabitant of the earth" (Isa. xxiv:17). This will be at the close of the present age. And do not the events in the world today indicate the rapid approach of the judgment sword?

And God's servant was commanded to sigh with bitterness before their eyes. He was to tell them the reason of his agony. "Because it cometh; and my heart shall melt, and all hands shall be feeble, and every spirit shall faint, and all knees shall be weak as water. Behold it cometh and shall be brought to pass, saith the Lord God." It was not the time for rejoicing, but for weeping and sighing.

The prophet was called upon to show forth in his behavior the solemn days which were now to come. And our Lord has predicted for our age upon earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves thereof roaring. "Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of heaven shall be shaken" (Luke xxi:25-26). But how little sighing with bitterness there is today among God's servants in view of what is in store for an ungodly and unbelieving age!

II. The Sharpening of the Sword.

Again the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, prophesy, and say, Thus saith the Lord; Say, A sword, a sword is sharpened, and also furbished: It is sharpened to make a sore slaughter; it is furbished that it may glitter: should we then make mirth? it contemneth the rod of my son, as every tree. And he hath given it to be furbished, that it may be handled: this sword is sharpened, and it is furbished, to give it into the hand of the slayer. Cry and howl, son of man; for it shall be upon my people, it shall be upon all the princes of Israel: terrors by reason of the sword shall be upon my people: smite therefore upon thy thigh. Because it is a trial, and what if the sword contemn even the rod? it shall be no more, saith the Lord God. Thou, therefore, son of man, prophesy, and smite thine hands together, and let the sword be doubled the third time, the sword of the slain: it is the sword of the great men that are slain, which entereth into their privy chambers. I have set the point of the sword against all their gates, that their heart may faint, and their ruins be multiplied: ah! it is made bright, it is wrapped up for the slaughter. Go thee one way or other, either on the right hand, or on the left, whithersoever thy face is set. I will also smite mine hands together, and I will cause my fury to rest: I the Lord have said it (verses 8-17).

The sword of judgment is now described as being prepared for the slaughter. How all this should have a meaning for us at the present time. All the nations of the earth, who boasted but yesterday of a civilization which makes for

righteousness and peace, are either at war or are preparing for war. May we not see behind it all the sword of the Lord? Has He not begun judgment among those nations? The threatening vengeance of the Lord will ere long fall upon this age which so long as turned a deaf ear to the wooings of His love. And the question here is asked, "Should we then make mirth?" Is this the time of mirth, worldly enjoyment and indifference? Not for God's people who discern the signs of the times and who know from the Word of God the coming events. The place for us is in "Bochim" (Judges ii:4-5. "Bochim" means "Weeping.") The time of the sharpening of the sword is the time for His people to trim their lamps, for earnest heart-searching and prayer. The character of the unsaved, nominal "Christian" masses is also being clearly revealed. They show what they are, "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God." Though the sword is being drawn and sharpened, they are given to mirth and pleasure, like the company described in 1 Sam. xxx:16. The sword of judgment will find them in their merry-making and will change all into weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Again the prophet is commanded to cry and to howl, to smite upon his thigh and to smite his hands together, in view of the coming terrors of judgment. And solemnly the Lord saith, "I will also smite mine hands together, and I will satisfy my fury."

III. The King of Babylon and His Divination

The word of the Lord came unto me, again saying, Also, thou son of man, appoint thee two ways, that the sword of the king of Babylon may come: both twain shall come forth out of one land: and choose thou a place, choose it at the head of the way to the city. Appoint a way, that the sword may come to Rabbath of the Ammonites, and to Judah in Jersualem the defenced. For the king of Babylon stood at the parting of the way, at the head of the two

ways, to use divination: he shook his arrows to and fro, he consulted with images, he looked in the liver. At this right hand was the divination for Jerusalem, to appoint captains, to open the mouth in the slaughter, to lift up the voice with shouting, to appoint battering rams against the gates, to cast a mount, and to build a fort. And it shall be unto them as a false divination in their sight, to them that have sworn oaths: but he will call to remembrance the iniquity, that they may be taken. Therefore thus saith the Lord God: Because ye have made your iniquity to be remembered, in that your transgressions are discovered, so that in all your doings your sins do appear; because, I say, that ye are come to remembrance, ye shall be taken with the hand (verses 18-24).

The King of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar, is the chosen instrument through whom the drawn and sharpened sword does its judgment work. He is seen in this paragraph using divination, to decide if he should go to Rabbath of the Ammonites or to Judah in Jerusalem. The King is standing at the parting of the way, at the head of the two ways. First he used the arrows. The authorized version is faulty in its translation; it is not, "he made his arrows bright," but "he shook his arrows to and fro." The Babylonians used all kinds of enchantments, sorceries, as well as star-gazers, astrologers, etc., to be guided in their undertakings. (See Isa. xlvii:8-15.) The King took two arrows and put upon each the name of the two cities mentioned; they were then shaken in the quiver and one was drawn out. He also used images (teraphim) which he consulted and looked into the liver. They generally killed a sheep and imagined that the different lines and formation of the liver gave them directions what to do. In the British Museum there is a Babylonian clay tablet with a sheep's liver covered with all kinds of lines and oracles. In the twenty-second verse we see the result of his divinations. He has pulled out of the quiver the arrow which has on it the word "Jerusalem." And so the siege of Jerusalem was

prepared. But the inhabitants of Jerusalem, who heard of the King's divination, branded it as a false divination (verse 23). They still hoped that all attempts made by Nebuchadnezzar would fail. But the hand of God was guiding all, and in the last verse of this paragraph (verse 25) the Lord announces the hopelessness of their expectations.

IV. The Wicked Prince and the Coming One.

> And thou, profane wicked prince of Israel, whose day is come, when iniquity shall have an end, Thus saith the Lord God; Remove the diadem, and take off the crown: this shall not be the same: exalt him that is low, and abase him that is high. I will overturn, overturn, overturn it: and it shall be no more, until he come whose right it is; and I will give it him (verses 25-27).

And now follows a most interesting utterance of the prophet which has a future meaning. There can be no question that Zedekiah is first of all in view as the profane wicked* prince of Israel. But the prophecy looks far beyond Zedekiah. It is the coming wicked prince, the one who comes in his own name, the final Antichrist, the false Messiah, or, as he is also called in Revelation, the false prophet. That verse 25 refers to the time of the end is seen by the words, "in the time of the iniquity of the end" (correct translation). The same phrase appears in Dan. xi:35-39, "the time of the end," and the person described in that passage is the Antichrist, the wicked prince. It is the time of the future great tribulation "when the transgressors are come to the full" (Dan. vii:23). This false Christ will claim priestly and kingly honors. He is the beast out of the earth (Rev. xiii) having two horns like a lamb, but speaking as a dragon. The two horns represent the priesthood

*Literal translation is, "O deadly wounded wicked one, the Prince of Israel."

and the kingship he assumes. And this we learn from verse 26 is the character of the wicked prince of Israel of whom Ezekiel speaks. Again, we must correct the faulty translation of the authorized version: "Remove the mitre and take off the crown"; the word "diadem" is mitre, the head-dress of the high-priest (Exod. xxvii:4). He wears the mitre of the priest and the crown of the king. He is Satan's final counterfeit (like the pope) of the Priest-King. In verse 27 the overturning times are mentioned. Thrice it is stated, "I will overturn." Even so will it be at the time of the end until He comes whose right it is. And the coming One, who will exalt what is low and abase what is high, who will remove the mitre and the crown from the Antichrist, destroying him by the brightness of His coming (2 Thess. ii) is the Lord Jesus Christ. It is interesting to see that there is in the Hebrew a word used which is very suggestive. In Genesis xlix:10 we have Christ spoken of as Shiloh. The word "until He come" in the Hebrew is almost the same as Shiloh; it is Shelloh. And surely the overturning times are almost upon us, and soon that profane wicked Prince may arise. However, we do not wait for that wicked one; we wait for the Lord.

V. The Judgment to Fall Upon Ammon.

And thou, son of man, prophesy and say, Thus saith the Lord God concerning the Ammonites, and concerning their reproach; even say thou, The sword, the sword is drawn: for the slaughter it is furbished, to consume because of the glittering: While they see vanity unto thee, while they divine a lie unto thee, to bring thee upon the necks of them that are slain, of the wicked whose day is come, when their iniquity shall have an end. Shall I cause it to return into his sheath? I will judge thee in the place where thou wast created, in the land of thy nativity. And I will pour out mine indignation upon thee; I will blow against thee in the fire of my wrath, and deliver thee into the hand of brutish men, and

skillful to destroy. Thou shalt be for fuel to the fire; thy blood shall be in the midst of the land; thou shalt be no more, for I the Lord have spoken it (verses 28-32).

The judgment came upon the Ammonites is threatened here. But it must not be overlooked that this prophecy also has a further meaning, for the same words "in the time of the iniquity of the end" (verse 29) appears here. And yet there is also promised for the future a restoration of Ammon (Jer. xlix:6).

JERUSALEM'S ABOMINATIONS.

Chapter xxii.

This chapter describes again the sins and abominations of Jerusalem. Before the sharpened sword of divine justice and retribution does its dreadful work, the Lord uncovers the guilt and vileness of the city and lays bare the corruption of her prophets, priests and princes, as well as the people.

I. The Violence and Abominations of Jerusalem.

Moreover the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Now, thou son of man, wilt thou judge, wilt thou judge the bloody city? yea, thou shalt shew her all her abominations. Then say thou, Thus saith the Lord God; The city sheddeth blood in the midst of it, that her time may come, and maketh idols against herself to defile herself. Thou art become guilty in thy blood that thou hast shed; and hast defiled thyself in thine idols which thou hast made; and thou hast caused thy days to draw near, and art come even unto thy years: therefore have I made thee a reproach unto the heathen, and a mocking to all countries. Those that be near, and those that be far from thee, shall mock thee, which art infamous and much vexed. Behold, the princes of Israel, every one were in thee to their power to shed blood. In thee have they set light by father and mother: in the midst of thee have they dealt by oppression with the stranger: in thee have they vexed the fatherless and the widow. Thou hast despised mine holy things, and hast profaned my sabbaths. In thee are men that carry tales to shed blood:

and in thee they eat upon the mountains: in the midst of thee they commit lewdness. In thee have they discovered their fathers' nakedness: in thee have they humbled her that was set apart for pollution. And one hath committed abomination with his neighbor's wife; and another hath lewdly defiled his daughter-in-law; and another in thee hath humbled his sister, his father's daughter. In thee have they taken gifts to shed blood; thou hast taken usury and increase, and thou hast greedily gained of thy neighbors by extortion, and hast forgotten me, saith the Lord God. Behold, therefore I have smitten mine hand at thy dishonest gain which thou hast made, and at thy blood which hath been in the midst of thee. Can thine heart endure, or can thine hands be strong, in the days that I shall deal with thee? I the Lord have spoken it, and will do it. And I will scatter thee among the heathen, and disperse thee in the countries, and will consume thy filthiness out of thee. And thou shalt take thine inheritance in thy self in the sight of the heathen, and thou shalt know that I am the Lord (verses 1-16).

Jerusalem is called here a bloody city on account of the deeds of violence which were committed in her midst. Once it was a faithful city, full of judgment and righteousness; but she had become an harlot, and murderers lodged in it (Isaiah i:21). The prophets and the righteous had been killed in her midst. And He who sent these messages of warning and impending judgment, who waited so patiently for Jerusalem's repentance and the return of His people, came in the fullness of time, in the midst of His people and to that city. Before He went to the cross of Calvary, where He gave Himself and where also Jerusalem's bloodguiltiness was fearfully crowned by killing the Prince of Life (Acts iii:15), He stood before that city with tear-filled eyes and uttered those tender and never to be forgotten words: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathered her chickens under her wings, and ye would not" (Matt.

xxiii:37). And Stephen said, "Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which showed before of the coming of the Just One, of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers" (Acts vii:52). "His blood be upon us and our children" was their awful cry, when the bloody city delivered Him into the hands of the Gentiles, and ever since they have been, Cain-like, the homeless wanderers among the nations, till some day they will acknowledge their bloodguiltiness and turn to Him. And in this chapter the Lord describes all her violence and abominations. All were guilty of violence and the shedding of blood, especially the princes, the Kings of Judah. (See Jeremiah xxvi:21 and xxxviii:4, etc.). And inasmuch as they had turned away from Jehovah and worshipped idols, moral corruption and the vile things man is capable of were likewise present.

And such are also the conditions today among the nations, which profess to be Christian; violence and bloodshed, moral corruption and abomination. May we not forget that the Lord, who knew Jerusalem's guilt and judged her for it, is the same today, who will judge the violence and the abominations on the earth among nations whose privileges have been even greater than the privileges and blessings of Jerusalem. "Thou hast forgotten Me," was Jehovah's accusation against the city. Had they remembered Jehovah's kindness, His gracious dealing with their fathers, had they remembered His Word, these abominations would not have come to pass. And the source of the violence, the bloodshed, the moral darkness in the world today, is that the nations have forgotten God. The judgment of the city is again announced.

II. The Smelting Furnace.

And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, the house of Israel is to me become dross; all they are brass and tin and

iron and lead, in the midst of the furnace; they are even the dross of silver. Therefore thus saith the Lord God; Because ye are all become dross, behold, therefore, I will gather you into the midst of Jerusalem. As they gather silver and brass and iron and lead and tin into the midst of the furnace, to blow the fire upon it, to melt it; so will I gather you in mine anger and in my fury, and I will leave you there, and melt you. Yea, I will gather you, and blow upon you in the fire of my wrath, and ye shall be melted in the midst thereof. As silver is melted in the midst of the furnace, so shall ye be melted in the midst thereof; and ye shall know that I the Lord have poured out my fury upon you (verses 17-23).

The smelting furnace is the symbol of Jehovah's fiery indignation against Jerusalem and its inhabitants. A furnace is either for refining or for destruction. In the future the remnant of Israel will be refined by the fires of persecution and tribulation (Mal. iii:1-3). To the godly part of His earthly people He saith "Behold I have refined thee, but not as silver; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction" (Isaiah xlviii:10). But here in Ezekiel's message it is not the question of refining but of punishment by fire. Israel is dross. Brass, tin, iron, lead, dross of silver are mentioned, but gold is significantly omitted. It stands for righteousness and that was lacking in Jerusalem. The fury of the Lord would fan the flame and all gathered together, like worthless metals would be melted by the wrath of the Lord.

III. The Corruption of the Prophets, the Priests and the Princes.

And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, say unto her, Thou art the land that is not cleansed, nor rained upon in the day of indignation. There is a conspiracy of her prophets in the midst thereof, like a roaring lion ravening the prey: they have devoured souls; they have taken the treasure and precious thing; they have made her many widows in the midst thereof. Her priests have violated my law, and have profaned mine holy things: they have put no difference between the holy and profane,

neither have they shewed difference between the unclean and the clean, and have hid their eyes from my sabbaths, and I am profaned among them. Her princes in the midst thereof are like wolves ravening the prey, to shed blood and to destroy souls, to get dishonest gain. And her prophets have daubed them with untempered mortar, seeing vanity, and divining lies unto them, saying, Thus saith the Lord God, when the Lord hath not spoken. The people of the land have used oppression and exercised robbery, and have vexed the poor and needy: yea, they have oppressed the stranger wrongfully. And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it; but I found none. Therefore have I poured out mine indignation upon them; I have consumed them with the fire of my wrath: their own way have I recompensed upon their head, saith the Lord God (verses 23-31).

What corruption this additional message of the Lord reveals! The land had already been cursed for the wicked deeds of its tenants The religious leaders, the prophets, these false prophets with their lying messages, instead of saving souls and warning to flee from the wrath to come, devoured souls. The priests, called to minister in holy things, were as bad; they profaned the holy things. They were blasphemers instead of worshippers. These characteristics of false prophets and false priests are repeated in our own times. Like these false prophets whom Ezekiel describes, the modern day religious leaders, mislead the people by giving lying messages and by glossing over men's sins and not giving to them the Word of the Lord. Like priests, like people! The people were lovers of money and oppressors of the poor. Jehovah looked for a man to stand in the gap between Him and the land, but there was none. There is no help and hope in man, for all have gone astray and there is none that doeth good. But there is One—blessed be God!—who has stood in the gap, our Lord Jesus Christ. "And He saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was none to interpose, therefore His

own arm brought salvation to Him, and His righteousness, it upheld Him" (Isaiah lix:16). Through Him "all Israel" is yet to be saved and receive the promised blessings.

THE TWO SISTERS AHOLAH AND AHOLIBAH.

Chapter xxiii.

Once more a parable is given to illustrate and expose the wickedness of Samaria and Jerusalem in their ungodly relationship with Assyria and Chaldea. On the whole, this chapter bears a similar message as the one contained in chapter xvi, however, with this difference that here the later history of the two kingdoms, the Kingdom of Israel and the Kingdom of Judah and their defilement with heathen nations is the prominent feature. The chapter has five sections.

I. The Two Sisters Aholah and Aholibah.

> The word of the Lord came again unto me, saying, Son of man, there were two women, the daughters of one mother: And they committed whoredom in Egypt; they committed whoredom in their youth: there were their breasts pressed, and there they bruised the teats of their virginity. And the names of them were Aholah the elder, and Aholibah her sister: and they were mine, and they bare sons and daughters. Thus were their names; Samaria is Aholah, and Jerusalem Aholibah (verses 1-4).

The two daughters of one mother are Samaria and Jerusalem, called sisters in chapter xvi:46. They were sisters not only because they had the same mother, the Jewish nation, but they were also sisters in their vile idolatry. Samaria is called Aholah. Aholah means "her tent." Jerusalem is named Aholibah, "my tent is in her." The latter denotes the fact that the true sanctuary was in Judah, while the Kingdom of Israel, Samaria, practised a "false worship." Yet Jehovah owned them both as His people.

II. Aholah's Wickedness.

And Aholah played the harlot when she was mine; and she doted on her lovers, on the Assyrians her neighbours, Which were clothed with blue, captains and rulers, all of them desirable young men, horsemen riding upon horses. Thus she commited her whoredoms with them, with all them that were the chosen men of Assyria, and with all on whom she doted: with all their idols she defiled herself. Neither left she her whoredoms brought from Egypt: for in her youth they lay with her, and they bruised the breasts of her virginity, and poured their whoredom upon her. Wherefore I have delivered her into the hand of her lovers, into the hand of the Assyrians, upon whom she doted. These discovered her nakedness: they took her sons and her daughters, and slew her with the sword and she became famous among women; for they had executed judgment upon her (verses 5-10).

Aholah's, Samaria's, wickedness is described first. It began with Jeroboam's idolatry (1 Kings xii:25) and became worse and worse. They went to Assyria and shared their corruption in idolatry and made a covenant with that nation (Hosea xii:2). Thus Samaria played the harlot by forsaking the Lord and turning to Assyria, trusting on Assyria instead on the Lord, and then she defiled herself with all their idols. Hosea described their condition. "Ephraim also is like a silly dove without heart; they call to Egypt, they go to Assyria. When they shall go I will spread my net upon them; I will bring them down as the fowls of the heaven; I will chastise them, as their congregation hath heard. Woe unto them! for they have fled from me; destruction unto them! because they have transgressed against me, though I have redeemed them, yet they have spoken lies against me" (Hosea vii:11-13). The judgment of Samaria is also mentioned. The Lord delivered the people into the hands of the nation with which they had become enamored, to discover their nakedness. "Wherefore, I have delivered her into the hand of her lovers, into the

hand of the Assyrians, upon whom she doted." The historical record of this is found in 2 Kings xvii, when Hoshea, King of Samaria, became servant to Shalmaneser, King of Assyria. And when Hoshea acted treacherously, Shalmaneser imprisoned Samaria's king and led the people away into Assyria.

III. The Wickedness of Aholibah.

> And when her sister Aholibah saw this, she was more corrupt in her inordinate love than she, and in her whoredom more than her sister in her whoredom. She doted upon the Assyrians her neighbours, captains and rulers clothed most gorgeously, horsemen riding upon horses, all of them desirable young men. Then I saw that she was defiled, that they took both one way, And that she increased her whoredom: for when she saw men pourtrayed upon the wall, the images of the Chaldeans pourtrayed with vermillion, Girded with girdles upon their loins, exceeding in dyed attire upon their heads, all of them princes to look to, after the manner of their nativity: And as soon as she saw them with her eyes, she doted upon them, and sent messengers unto them into Chaldea. And the Babylonians came to her into the bed of love, and they defiled her with their whoredom, and she was polluted with them, and her mind was alienated from them. So she discovered her whoredom, and discovered her nakedness: then my mind was alienated from her, like as my mind was alienated from her sister. Yet she multiplied her whoredoms, in calling to remembrance the days of her youth, wherein she had played the harlot in the land of Egypt. For she doted upon their paramours, whose flesh is as the flesh of asses, and whose issue is like the issue of horses. Thus thou calledst to remembrance the lewdness of thy youth, in bruising thy teats by the Egyptians for the paps of thy youth (verses 11-21).

And her sister Aholibah, Jerusalem, saw this, but did not profit by it. She became even more corrupt than Samaria and increased her whoredoms. She was enjoying greater privileges and blessings than Samaria and therefore her wickedness and fall was greater. King Ahaz, when pressed by Rezin, the King of Syria and Remaliah, King of Israel, sent messengers to Tiglath-pileser, King of Assyria, with

the message, "I am thy servant and thy son, come up and save me" (2 Kings xvi:5-8).

He also took the silver and gold in the house of the Lord and gave it as a present to the Assyrian King. Isaiah's message and offer as described in Isaiah vii he refused. Then King Ahaz "went to Damascus to meet Tiglath-pileser, King of Assyria, and saw an altar that was at Damascus. And King Ahaz sent to Urijah the priest, the fashion of the altar, and the patterns of it, according to all the workmanship thereof." This strange altar was set up in Jerusalem, and the house of the Lord was defiled by him (2 Kings xvi: 10-20). Likewise, Jerusalem also followed the Chaldeans and was inflamed by the pictures of the Chaldeans portrayed on walls in vermillion, the peculiar color used by the Chaldeans. She loved Chaldea, Babylon with her vile idolatry, and sent messengers to the Chaldeans. And the Babylonians responded and came to her to corrupt Jerusalem. Then Jehovah says: "My mind was alienated from her, like as my mind was alienated from her sister." Yet she continued in her evil ways. In all this we have a description of Jerusalem's history in becoming defiled by heathen nations, their idolatries and corresponding immoralities.

IV. Aholibah's Punishment.

Therefore, O Aholibah, thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I will raise up thy lovers against thee, from whom thy mind is alienated, and I will bring them against thee on every side; the Babylonians, and all the Chaldeans, Pekod, and Shoa, and Koa, and all the Assyrians with them: all of them desirable young men, captains and rulers, great lords and renowned, all of them riding upon horses. And they shall come against thee with chariots, wagons, and wheels, and with an assembly of people, which shall set against thee buckler and shield and helmet round about: and I will set judgment before them, and they shall judge thee according to their judgments. And I will set my jealousy against thee, and they shall deal furiously with thee: they shall take away thy nose and thine ears; and thy remnant shall fall by the sword: they shall take thy

sons and thy daughters; and thy residue shall be devoured by the fire. They shall also strip thee out of thy clothes, and take away thy fair jewels. Thus will I make thy lewdness to cease from thee, and thy whoredom brought from the land of Egypt: so that thou shalt not lift up thine eyes unto them, nor remember Egypt any more. For thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I will deliver thee into the hand of them whom thou hatest, into the hand of them from whom thy mind is alienated: And they shall deal with thee hatefully, and shall take away all thy labour, and shall leave thee naked and bare: and the nakedness of thy whoredoms shall be discovered, both thy lewdness and thy whoredoms. I will do these things unto thee, because thou hast gone a whoring after the heathen, and because thou art polluted with their idols. Thou hast walked in the way of thy sister; therefore will I give her cup into thine hand. Thus saith the Lord God; Thou shalt drink of thy sister's cup deep and large: thou shalt be laughed to scorn and had in derision; it containeth much. Thou shalt be filled with drunkenness and sorrow, with the cup of astonishment and desolation, with the cup of thy sister Samaria. Thou shalt even drink it and suck it out, and thou shalt break the shreds thereof, and pluck off thine own breasts: for I have spoken it, saith the Lord God. Therefore thus saith the Lord God; Because thou hast forgotten me, and cast me behind thy back, therefore bear thou thy lewdness and thy whoredoms (verses 22-35).

And those with whom she had sinned were to be her chastisers. "Behold I will raise up thy lovers against thee. . . . I will bring them against thee on every side." Her well-deserved judgment would be, as it was, in the hands of the Babylonians, all the Chaldeans, as well as the Assyrians. ". . . And they shall come against thee with chariots, wagons and wheels, with an assembly of people, which shall set against thee buckler and shield and helmet round about, and I will set judgment before them, and they shall judge thee according to their judgment." A holy and righteous God in His wrath moved these vile nations to heap upon this disobedient and idolatrous people the worst punishments. "They shall deal furiously with thee, they shall take away thy nose and thine ears, and thy remnant shall

fall by the sword; they shall take thy sons and thy daughters, and thy residue shall be devoured by the fire." The explorations in Assyria have brought to light wall-sculptures in which such atrocities are depicted. God is righteous, and divine retribution was thus manifested in Jerusalem's shameful history. And in our own times we behold similar judgments in the earth meted out upon nations, professedly Christian, who forgot God and rejected His holy Word. Jerusalem had walked in the ways of her vile sister Samaria and had even outdone her in wickedness. She was, therefore, to drink her cup, "because thou hast forgotten me and cast me behind thy back, therefore bear thou also thy lewdness and thy whoredoms." Jerusalem had seen all what happened to the northern kingdom when Shalmaneser had carried them away, yet she kept right on in her evil course and did not repent of her idolatries, her vile immoralities and wickedness. And so it is today. Nations reap what they have sown, and other nations, like our own, do not take the warning. They continue in the downward course, rejecting God's holy Word and are guilty of the same sins as the nations who drink now the cup of divine displeasure. Ere long the judgments of God will reach every nation for the evil they have done.

V. Final Rehearsal of their Sins and Punishments.

The Lord said moreover unto me; Son of man, wilt thou judge Aholah and Aholibah? yea, declare unto them their abominations; That they have committed adultery, and blood is in their hands, and with their idols have they committed adultery, and have also caused their sons, whom they bare unto me, to pass for them through the fire, to devour them. Moreover this they have done unto me: they have defiled my sanctuary in the same day, and have profaned my sabbaths. For when they had slain their children to their idols, then they came the same day into my sanctuary to profane it; and, lo, thus have they done in the midst of mine house. And furthermore, that ye have sent for men to come from far,

unto whom a messenger was sent; and, lo, they came: for whom thou didst wash thyself, paintedst thy eyes, and deckedst thyself with ornaments, And satest upon a stately bed, and a table prepared before it, whereupon thou hast set mine incense and mine oil. And a voice of a multitude being at ease was with her: and with the men of the common sort were brought Sabeans from the wilderness, which put bracelets upon their hands, and beautiful crowns upon their heads. Then said I unto her that was old in adulteries, Will they now commit whoredoms with her, and she with them? Yet they went in unto her, as they go in unto a woman that playeth the harlot: so went they in unto Aholah and unto Aholibah, the lewd women.

And the righteous men, they shall judge them after the manner of adulteresses, and after the manner of women that shed blood; because they are adulteresses, and blood is in their hands. For thus saith the Lord God; I will bring up a company upon them, and will give them to be removed and spoiled. And the company shall stone them with stones, and dispatch them with their swords; they shall slay their sons and their daughters, and burn up their houses with fire. Thus will I cause lewdness to cease out of the land, that all women may be taught not to do after your lewdness. And they shall recompense your lewdness upon you, and ye shall bear the sins of your idols: and ye shall know that I am the Lord God (verses 36-49).

Little comment is needed on this final section; there is a recapitulation of the sins of Aholah and Aholibah. They committed adultery with their idols, both in a spiritual way and also literally. Their offspring were cast into the fiery arms of Moloch and thus slain to their idols. They profaned the sanctuary of the Lord. Adulterers they were and blood was in their hands. What degradation! Licentiousness, violence and child sacrifice were the leading sins of the nation and these were produced by having forgotten God and by idolatry. The punishment of the adulterers, according to the law, stoning, awaited Jerusalem. "And the company shall stone them with stones and dispatch them with their swords; they shall slay their sons and their daughters, and burn up their houses with fire. Thus will I cause lewdness

to cease out of the land, that all women (surrounding nations who knew of Jerusalem's vileness) be taught not to go after your lewdness. And they (the heathen nations) shall recompense your lewdness upon you, and ye shall bear the sins of your idols, and ye shall know that I am the Lord." The Lord had manifested Himself to Jerusalem as a Lord of grace and power. He had dealt with that nation as He had not dealt with others. "You only have I known of all the families of the earth, therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities" (Amos iii:2). In awful judgments they were to learn that He is the Lord; what they should have known through His mercies, they found out by the punishment from the hands of a righteous Lord. All this will be repeated in future history. The time is not distant when still greater judgments will be poured out upon nations as well as upon the Jewish people. During that time the world will find out that He is the Lord. "For when thy judgments are in the earth the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness" (Isa. xxvi:9).

THE BOILING POT AND THE LAST WORD.

Chapter xxiv.

We have reached the final message of this great Prophet concerning the judgment and overthrow of Jerusalem. The fatal siege of the city which sealed its doom, so long announced, had started. Ezekiel receives the information directly from the Lord and then utters the solemn words of the Lord in which for the last time the wickedness of the bloody city is made known. First, he spoke in a parable and afterwards in the death of his wife he was a sign unto them.

I. The Parable of the Boiling Pot and its Significance.

Again in the ninth year, in the tenth month, in the tenth day of

the month, the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, write thee the name of the day, even of this same day: the king of Babylon set himself against Jerusalem this same day. And utter a parable unto the rebellious house, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; Set on a pot, set it on, and also pour water into it: Gather the pieces thereof into it, even every good piece, the thigh, and the shoulder; fill it with the choice bones. Take the choice of the flock, and burn also the bones under it, and make it boil well, and let them seethe the bones of it therein. Wherefore thus saith the Lord God; Woe to the bloody city, to the pot whose scum is therein, and whose scum is not gone out of it, bring it out piece by piece; let no lot fall upon it. For her blood is in the midst of her; she set it upon the top of a rock; she poured it not upon the ground, to cover it with dust; That it might cause fury to come up to take vengeance; I have set her blood upon the top of a rock, that it should not be covered. Therefore thus saith the Lord God; Woe to the bloody city! I will even make the pile for fire great. Heap on wood, kindle the fire, consume the flesh, and spice it well, and let the bones be burned. Then set it empty upon the coals thereof, that the brass of it may be hot, and may burn, and that the filthiness of it may be molten in it, that the scum of it may be consumed. She hath wearied herself with lies, and her great scum went not forth out of her: her scum shall be in the fire. In thy filthiness is lewdness: because I have purged thee, and thou wast not purged, thou shalt not be purged from thy filthiness any more, till I have caused my fury to rest upon thee. I the Lord have spoken it: it shall come to pass, and I will do it; I will not go back, neither will I spare, neither will I repent; according to thy ways, and according to thy doings, shall they judge thee, saith the Lord God (verses 1-14).

The prophet is instructed to note the exact date, the tenth day of the tenth month in the ninth year. The same date we find in 2 Kings xxv:1. "And it came to pass in the ninth year of his reign in the tenth month, in the tenth day of the month, that Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, came, he, and all his hosts, against Jerusalem, and pitched against it; and they built forts against it round about." The same statement is made by Jeremiah (chapter lii:4). But how did

Ezekiel, far away from the scene of the siege, know the exact date when the king of Babylon began to carry out the threatened divine judgment? It was the Lord who gave him this information. This is the statement of the second verse, "Son of man, write thee the name of the day, even of this selfsame day, the king of Babylon set himself (literally, leaned upon) against Jerusalem this same day." Higher Criticism shows its teeth in connection with such definite statements which introduce the power of God. We quote the following from a recent commentator: "This verse (verse 2) forces on us in the clearest fashion the dilemma —either Ezekiel was a deliberate deceiver, or he was possessed of some kind of second sight." According to these words Ezekiel was either an out-and-out deceiver, a wicked man, or, he was a clairvoyant. That the word of the Lord came to him and imparted unto him the news that on the same day Jerusalem's siege had begun, is neither considered nor believed. Such is the blind unbelief of the modern critics. The boiling pot or caldron mentioned in this parable is the symbol of Jerusalem. What is cast into this pot typifies the guilty people; the choice bones and the choice of the flock, the leaders. All are to be thrown in one common caldron to seethe therein, the symbol of the fiery judgments which had now come upon the city. The scum* in the pot is symbolical of Jerusalem's sins. The woe is pronounced upon the bloody city on account of the scum; it is to be consumed. "She hath wearied Me with lies, and her great scum went not forth out of her; her scum shall be in the fire." While the inhabitants of the city are thus described suffering for their sins, the city itself will be dealt with (verse 11). This parable becomes still more interesting if we compare it with the message of the eleventh chap-

*Literally, Rust.

ter. Then the people of Jerusalem had said, "This city is the caldron, and we be the flesh" (xi:3). The Lord had answered them, "This city shall not be your caldron, within shall ye be the flesh in the midst thereof" (xi:11). They gave the caldron a different meaning from the parable here. As the flesh is preserved in a pot, a caldron, so they thought themselves secure and safe in Jerusalem. And now the Lord tells them that Jerusalem shall be a caldron, but not for their preservation, but for their judgment. They had deceived themselves when they thought themselves safe. His fury is now to be displayed upon bloody, filthy Jerusalem. "I the Lord have spoken it, it shall come to pass, and I will do it; I will not go back, neither will I spare, neither will I repent; according to thy ways, and according to thy doings shall they judge thee, saith the Lord God." What the Lord hath spoken will come to pass; He will do it. This is a solemn word. Men ignore what God has spoken. Others sneer at it and are unbelieving. The mass of professing Christians are indifferent and have no thought that God will do what He has spoken about judgments to come. But they will as surely come upon our age, as the threatened judgments came upon Jerusalem.

II. The Death of the Wife of Ezekiel.

> Also the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, behold, I take away from thee the desire of thine eyes with a stroke: yet neither shalt thou mourn nor weep, neither shall thy tears run down. Forbear to cry, make no mourning for the dead, bind the tire of thine head upon thee, and put on thy shoes upon thy feet, and cover not thy lips, and eat not the bread of men. So I spake unto the people in the morning: and at even my wife died; and I did in the morning as I was commanded (verses 15-18).

The second message which is given to Ezekiel in this chapter concerns himself. He is to lose the desire of his eyes, his wife, with a stroke. And the Lord tells him that

he is not to mourn or weep, nor is he to shed tears on account of the bereavement. All the customary signs of grief are forbidden him. These were the taking off of the headdress, the turban, and putting ashes on the head; taking off the shoes, walking barefooted (2 Sam. xv:30); the covering of the lips, the beard (Micah iii:7; see also Lev. xiii:45), and the eating of certain food, mourning-food. All this he was not to do. And while he faithfully delivered the Word of the Lord in the morning, at even his wife was taken from him and faithfully he obeyed the commandment of the Lord. Death had dissolved the marriage union and taken from the prophet the beloved wife. Even so the relationship between Jehovah and Jerusalem was now to be completely severed. And instead of a wild lamentation, a wailing cry, there should be a solemn silence. A similar message was also given to Jeremiah, "They shall die of grievous deaths; they shall not be lamented. . . . For thus saith the Lord, Enter not in the house of mourning, neither go to lament nor bemoan them" (Jer. xvi:4-9).

III. The Question of the People and the Answer.

And the people said unto me, Wilt thou not tell us what these things are to us, that thou doest so? Then I answered them, The word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Speak unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I will profane my sanctuary, the excellency of your strength, the desire of your eyes, and that which your soul pitieth; and your sons and your daughters whom ye have left shall fall by the sword. And ye shall do as I have done; ye shall not cover your lips, nor eat the bread of men. And your tires shall be upon your heads, and your shoes upon your feet: ye shall not mourn nor weep; but ye shall pine away for your iniquities, and mourn one toward another. Thus Ezekiel is unto you a sign; according to all that he hath done shall ye do; and when this cometh, ye shall know that I am the Lord God. Also, thou son of man, shall it not be, in the day when I take from them their strength, the joy of their glory, the desire of their eyes, and that whereupon they set their minds, their sons

and their daughters. That he that escapeth in that day shall come unto thee, to cause thee to hear it with thine ears? In that day shall thy mouth be opened to him which is escaped, and thou shalt speak, and be no more dumb; and thou shalt be a sign unto them; and they shall know that I am the Lord (verses 19-27).

The people then inquired of Ezekiel about the meaning of his actions. They wanted to know about the caldron and about his strange behaviour in not mourning over the death of his wife. The answer is again given by the Word of the Lord. The captives on the river Chebar, who surrounded the Prophet, hear now that the Lord is going to profane His own sanctuary. It was the object in which they boasted, the excellency of their strength and the desire of their eyes. Their sons and daughters who had been left behind by them were now to fall by the sword. As suddenly as the stroke bereft him of his wife, so should they lose their loved ones and they also were not to lament. Ezekiel was unto them a sign. As previously so now again he foreshadowed in his experience what was the common lot of the people. But more than that should come upon them. They were to pine away on account of their iniquities and moan one toward another; their grief would be manifested in groans and moans of deepest anguish. In all they were to know that He whom they rejected is the Lord. And so the world will make the same discovery before long, perhaps even now this solemn fact is being demonstrated before our eyes. Nations have forgotten God. They have rejected His Word. They trampled under foot His truth and the best the Lord has given. The measure of wickedness is rapidly being filled up and God, a holy, righteous God, must act in judgment and deal with man according to his ways and according to his works. The moans and the groans are on the earth.

And when all the prophet announced was accomplished,

when Jerusalem had fallen, then one that escaped should come to Ezekiel and tell him about it. Even so it happened. "And it came to pass in the twelfth year of our captivity, in the tenth month, in the fifth day of the month, that one that had escaped out of Jerusalem came unto me, saying, The city is smitten" (xxxiii:21). It was also announced to the Prophet that when this messenger came he should no more be dumb, but his mouth should be opened, and he would speak. Of this we read in chapter xxxiii:22; then he would resume his public activities.

PREDICTIONS OF JUDGMENT AGAINST THE NATIONS.

Chapters xxv-xxxii.

PREDICTIONS AGAINST AMMON, MOAB, EDOM AND THE PHILISTINES.

Chapter xxv.

A new section begins with this chapter. The prophet is now made the mouthpiece of Jehovah to utter prophecies concerning other nations. Two years after the message of the preceding chapter, the news came to Ezekiel announcing the fall of the city and after that, Ezekiel received the greater messages concerning Israel and her glorious future. The prophecies contained in chapters xxv-xxxii concerning the nations which came in touch with Israel were delivered at different times. See the dates in chapters xxvi:1, xxix:1, 17, xxx:20, xxxi:1 and xxxii:1, 17. The predictions concern just seven nations, and these are divided into four and three. The first four were the immediate neighbors of Israel. Then come larger prophecies against Tyre, with a message on the future return of Israel against Sidon and Egypt; Assyria is also mentioned. Isaiah, Jeremiah and Amos likewise received similar messages against the same nations. Their

guilt is uncovered and their judgment and overthrow makes the way for Israel's blessing and peace. While these judgments have had a partial, past fulfilment, the complete fulfilment is yet to come, for the prophetic Word shows that the nations who have sinned against Jehovah and His people will be judged in a coming day, when Israel will be restored and be blest. Such is evident when we read the gracious, still future promises to His earthly people. See chapters xxviii:24-26 and xxix:21. These unfulfilled promises concerning Israel's restoration as well as spiritual prosperity make it clear that these judgments hold a definite relation to future events.

I. The Prophecy Concerning Ammon.

The word of the Lord came again unto me, saying, Son of man, set thy face against the Ammonites, and prophesy against them; And say unto the Ammonites, Hear the word of the Lord God; Thus saith the Lord God; Because thou saidst, Aha, against my sanctuary, when it was profaned; and against the land of Israel, when it was desolate; and against the house of Judah, when they went into captivity; Behold, therefore I will deliver thee to the men of the East for a possession, and they shall set their palaces in thee, and make their dwellings in thee: they shall eat thy fruit, and they shall drink thy milk. And I will make Rabbah a stable for camels, and the Ammonites a couching place for flocks: and ye shall know that I am the Lord. For thus saith the Lord God; Because thou hast clapped thine hands, and stamped with the feet, and rejoiced in heart with all thy despite against the land of Israel; Behold, therefore I will stretch out mine hand upon thee, and will deliver thee for a spoil to the heathen; and I will cut thee off from the people, and I will cause thee to perish out of the countries: I will destroy thee; and thou shall know that I am the Lord (verses 1-7).

A message concerning Ammon had been given before to Ezekiel (chapter xxi:28-32). The prophet Jeremiah also announced the coming judgment for the Ammonites: "It shall be a desolate heap and her daughters shall be burned

with fire." But Jeremiah predicted a restoration of Ammon after the judgment. "And afterward I will bring again the captivity of the children of Ammon, saith the Lord" (Jer. lxix:1-6). God will accomplish this in His own time and way. We do not need to trouble ourselves how He will fulfill His Word; He takes care of that. Still another prophet speaks concerning them. Zephaniah (ii:8-11) shows that they reproached God's people and were filled with pride. As we know, both Ammon and Moab had a deeply humiliating origin (Gen. xxxvii:37-38) and had a racial connection with Israel. As the past history shows they were in constant conflict with Israel. When the sanctuary in the midst of God's people was profaned, the land laid desolate and the house of Judah went into captivity, they greatly rejoiced. Their exultation over Israel's sin and God's punishment revealed their own wicked, God-defying, unbelieving character. Therefore God is going to punish them. The men of the East were to conquer them and take them for a possession. The men of the East are the Bedouins. The word "palaces" must be translated "encampments." The Bedouins set up their tents in stone rings. And this prophecy has been fulfilled. The Bedouin nomads wander through Ammon's possession.

II. Prophecy Concerning Moab.

Thus saith the Lord God; Because that Moab and Seir do say, Behold, the house of Judah is like unto all the heathen; Therefore, behold, I will open the side of Moab from the cities, from his cities which are on his frontiers, the glory of the country, Beth-jeshimoth, Baal-meon and Kiriathaim, Unto the men of the east with the Ammonites, and will give them in possession, that the Ammonites may not be remembered among the nations. And I will execute judgments upon Moab; and they shall know that I am the Lord (verses 8-11).

Moab was the kin of Ammon.* Their country lay east of the Dead Sea. Other interesting prophetic messages on Moab are contained in Isaiah xv and xvi; Jer. xlviii and Amos ii:1. Jeremiah also gives a promise of Moab's restoration. "Yet will I bring again the captivity of Moab in the latter days, saith the Lord" (Jer. xlviii:47). Here the time of Moab's blessing is stated; it will be "in the latter days," the days still to come connected with the day of the Lord, the second Coming of Christ. Where Ammon and Moab are now, among what nations their descendants exist, is known to an omniscient God. How Moab will be brought back from captivity and installed in their territory in the latter days, we repeat, will be accomplished by the wisdom and power of God. The teaching which one hears occasionally, that the Ammonites and Moabites will be raised from the dead and restored physically is more than a fanciful speculation; it is an evil, unscriptural doctrine. The Word of God nowhere teaches a physical resurrection of ungodly nations of the past for a second chance. Moab also sneered at the house of Judah and mockingly declared "the house of Judah is like unto all the heathen." They were a proud and arrogant people. "We have heard of the pride of Moab, he is exceedingly proud, his loftiness and his arrogancy and his pride and the haughtiness of his heart" (Jer. xlviii:29). Isaiah gives the same description of their character (Isa. xvi:6). And the God of Israel who governs the nations and deals with them in judgment humbled them into the dust. The Bedouins are now likewise the possessors of their country. "And I will execute judgments upon Moab; and they shall know that I am the Lord." And these judg-

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*Moab and Ammon were the incestuous offspring of Lot. (Genesis xix:37-38.)

ments upon proud, self-exalting, God-forgetting nations, are not confined to the past. Some nations of Europe, who claimed to be nations of civilization and making for righteousness, so often called "Christian nations," have been lifted up in pride, forgetting God in their prosperity, and now a righteous God has put His hand upon them, so that they should find out that He is the Lord.

III. Prophecy Concerning Edom.

> Thus saith the Lord God; Because that Edom hath dealt against the house of Judah by taking vengeance, and hath greatly offended, and revenged himself upon them; Therefore thus saith the Lord God; I will also stretch out mine hand upon Edom, and will cut off man and beast from it; and I will make it desolate from Teman; and they of Dedan shall fall by the sword. And I will lay my vengeance upon Edom by the hand of my people Israel: and they shall do in Edom according to my fury; and they shall know my vengeance, saith the Lord God (verses 12-14).

Edom, the descendants of Esau, the son of Jacob, was more closely connected with Israel than Ammon and Moab. And Edom's deeds were more pronouncedly against the people of God, more wicked and defiant, than the others. Israel was especially commanded not to abhor an Edomite. "Thou shalt not abhor an Edomite, for he is thy brother" (Deut. xxiii:7). They greatly offended and revenged themselves upon them. Amos declared their sin. "He did pursue his brother with the sword, and did cast off all pity, and his anger did tear perpetually, and he kept his wrath forever" (Amos i:11). Edom's pride is uncovered by Obadiah (Obd. verses 3-4), who also shows Edom's sin against his brother (verses 10-14). And the cruel Herods, the types of Antichrist, were Edomites. Edom's judgment is to be executed by Israel. This is to take place in a future day. See Obadiah's prophecy (verses 17-21) and (Amos ix:11-12). Yet judgment has long ago fallen upon Edom,

as predicted in verse 14. What evidence that the words spoken by these prophets are the words of God, supernatural in their origin and sure in their fulfilment! We shall find some striking evidences in the predictions uttered by Ezekiel against Tyre and Egypt. There is a time coming when every prediction in the Bible will be accomplished. Then the Bible is gloriously vindicated and all its enemies will forever disappear.

IV. Prophecy Concerning the Philistines.

> Thus saith the Lord God; Because the Philistines have dealt by revenge, and have taken vengeance with a despiteful heart, to destroy it for the old hatred; Therefore thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I will stretch out mine hand upon the Philistines, and I will cut off the Cherethims, and destroy the remnant of the sea-coast. And I will execute great vengeance upon them with furious rebukes; and they shall know that I am the Lord, when I shall lay my vengeance upon them (verses 15-17).

Another "thus saith the Lord." The Philistines dwelt on a narrow strip on the seashore and were the long continued enemies of the people Israel. Jeremiah speaks of them (chapter cxlvii). See also Amos i:6-9; Joel iii:4; Isa. xix:29-32. The vengeance of the Lord fell upon the coast of Palestina, the Philistines; and they experienced the fury of the Lord. He dealt with them who had corrupted His people. And so God will deal in due time with all His enemies.

PROPHECIES CONCERNING TYRUS.

Chapter xxvi.

A lengthy prophecy concerning Tyre is contained in this and the following chapters. It is of much interest. The divinely given predictions against that once powerful city have seen a literal fulfilment; certain periods of Tyre's downfall and overthrow are made known by the prophet.

History confirms all that is written here. In subsequent chapters we find much information on the riches and the greatness of that ancient city, while the description of the King of Tyre, which fits only the prince of this world, Satan, who governed Tyre's King, is of intense interest and much importance. Here are also many spiritual lessons, and a good deal which finds a ready application to present day world-conditions.

I. The Overthrow of Tyrus Announced.

And it came to pass in the eleventh year, in the first day of the month, that the word of the Lord came unto me saying, Son of man, because that Tyrus hath said against Jerusalem, Aha! she is broken that was the gates of the people; she is turned unto me; I shall be replenished, now she is laid waste: Therefore thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I am against thee, O Tyrus, and will cause many nations to come up against thee, as the sea causeth his waves to come up. And they shall destroy the walls of Tyrus, and break down her towers; I will also scrape her dust from her, and make her like the top of a rock. It shall be a place for the spreading of nets in the midst of the sea: for I have spoken it, saith the Lord God: and it shall become a spoil to the nations. And her daughters which are in the field shall be slain by the sword; and they shall know that I am the Lord. For thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I will bring upon Tyrus Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, a king of kings, from the north, with horses, and with chariots, and with horsemen, and companies, and much people. He shall slay with the sword thy daughters in the field; and he shall make a fort against thee, and cast a mount against thee, and lift up the buckler against thee. And he shall set engines of war against thy walls, and with his axes he shall break down thy towers. By reason of the abundance of his horses their dust shall cover thee: thy walls shall shake at the noise of the horsemen, and of the wheels, and of the chariots, when he shall enter into thy gates, as men enter into a city wherein is made a breach. With the hoofs of his horses shall he tread down all thy streets: he shall slay thy people by the sword, and thy strong garrisons shall go down to the ground. And they shall make a spoil of thy riches, and make a prey of thy merchandise: and they shall break down thy walls, and destroy thy

pleasant houses; and they shall lay thy stones and thy timber and thy dust in the midst of the water. And I will cause the noise of thy songs to cease; and the sound of thy harps shall be no more heard. And I will make thee like the top of a rock; thou shalt be a place to spread nets upon; thou shalt be built no more: for I the Lord have spoken it, saith the Lord God (verses 1-14).

The City of Tyrus (which means rock) was partly built upon an island off the mainland in the Mediterranean Sea. It was an ancient Phoenician city and is mentioned in Scripture for the first time in Joshua xix:29, where it is called "The strong city." It had a wonderful commerce, a description of which in its variety, we find in the twenty-seventh chapter. It was inhabited by seafaring men, and the prophet Isaiah describes this wealthy and influential city as "the crowning city, whose merchants are princes, whose traffickers are the honorable of the earth," (Isaiah xxiii:8). We read in the next chapter how Syria, Persia, Egypt, Spain, Greece and every quarter of the ancient world laid their choicest and most precious things at the feet of Tyre, who sat enthroned on Ivory, covered with blue and purple from the isles of Elishah. Her beauty was perfect (Ez. xxvii:11). During the reign of David and Solomon, Tyre came into great prominence, playing an important role in the commercial, political and religious history of Israel. Hiram, King of Tyrus sent cedar trees to Jerusalem, as well as workmen, who built David a house (2 Sam. v:11). How Tyrus aided in the construction of the temple and the palace under Solomon's reign, may be learned by consulting the following passages: 1 King v:1-12; vii:13-14; 1 Chronicles xiv:1; 2 Chronicles ii:3, 11. When the ships of Solomon sailed away to Ophir, "Hiram sent in the navy his servants, ship-men that had knowledge of the sea, with the servants of Solomon, and they came to Ophir, and fetched from thence gold, four hundred and twenty talents, and brought it to King Solomon" (1 Kings ix:27-28). The Tyrians were

great voyagers, the masters of the sea, and founded colonies, among them Carthage. Israel's close relations with Tyrus continued probably for centuries. The wicked wife of King Ahab, Jezebel, was the daughter of Ethbaal, King of Tyre. She fostered successfully the vile Phoenician idolatry among Israel. Tyre also sent messengers to King Zedekiah, probably to form an alliance against the approaching Babylonian conqueror (Jer. xxvii:3). She was a proud, luxurious and wicked city, which defied God. She sinned against Jerusalem and the people Israel. Joel and Amos speak of her sins (Joel iii:4-6; Amos i:9-10) and announced her judgment. So did the prophet Isaiah (chapter xxiii) and Jeremiah (xlvii:4). Ezekiel gives us the completest description of this city, her resources, her luxuries and far reaching influence, her King under Satanic control and also the details of her judgment.

In the third verse of our chapter we read the divine announcement of Tyre's fate. "Behold I am against thee, O Tyrus, and will cause many nations to come up against thee, as the sea causes its waves to come up. And they shall destroy the walls of Tyrus, and break down her towers; I will also scrape her dust from her, and make her like the top of a rock." It was to become a place for the spreading of nets and a spoil to the nations. This great judgment was not all at once carried out. Nebuchadnezzar came first against her as predicted in verses 7-11. He besieged the Tyre on the mainland and after thirteen years took the city; while that part of Tyrus which was built upon the island in the sea, protected by the fleet of Tyrus, escaped. Then came for her seventy years when she was forgotten, as predicted by Isaiah (xxiii:15). After these years had passed Tyrus saw a startling revival. The island city became more powerful and wicked than before, "she committed fornication with all the kingdoms of the world upon the

face of the earth" (Isa. xxiii:17). The continental Tyrus, however, remained in ruins.

Centuries passed and it seemed as if Ezekiel's prophecy concerning Tyre's complete overthrow would remain unfulfilled. It was about 240 years after when the literal fulfilment of this prophecy was accomplished. Alexander the Great came against the city built on the island. After seven months the city was taken by means of a mole, by which the forces of Alexander could enter the city. In constructing this mole, Alexander made use of the ruins of the old city. The stones, timber and the very dust of the destroyed city was laid into the sea to erect the causeway which accomplished the utter ruin of the wealthy city. And thus Ezekiel's prophecy was fulfilled. "And they shall lay thy stones and thy timber and thy dust in the midst of the water." The complete end of Tyrus had come. "And thou shalt be no more, though thou be sought for, yet shalt thou never be found again" (verse 21). So completely was the work done by Alexander, depositing the debris of the ruins of Tyrus on the mainland into the sea, that its exact site will remain undeterminable. And Alexander the Great fulfilled still another prophecy. Before he came on his mission, directed by God, to make an end of the proud and wicked city, Zechariah, the great post-exilic prophet, had once more announced the fate of Tyrus. "And Tyrus," said the Lord through Zechariah, "did build herself a stronghold, and heaped up silver as the dust, and fine gold as the ruin of the sheets." This was after Nebuchadnezzar had destroyed the Tyrus on the mainland and she became the great island city. "Thus," said Zechariah, "behold, the Lord will cast her out, and He will smite her power in the sea, and she shall be devoured with fire" (Zech. ix:3-4). Alexander did this; he laid proud Tyrus in ashes.

What an evidence that all these words are the Word of God! God looks to the fulfilment of all He revealed to His prophets. It may appear often as if visions were in vain and prophecies remain unaccomplished. God does not need to be in a hurry; He can afford to take His time. But finally every prophecy contained in the Holy Scriptures will be fulfilled. Proud and boasting, like Tyrus, are the great nations of our age. Wealth and luxuries are seen on all sides and with it moral evil and every form of wickedness. Judgment is surely in store for the nations that forget God. As we know from the book of Revelation this present age will culminate in the formation of Babylon the Great. Much in Revelation xviii reminds us of Tyrus in this chapter of Ezekiel and the next chapter.

II. The Effect of Tyre's Fall and the Lamentation.

Thus saith the Lord God to Tyrus; shall not the isles shake at the sound of thy fall, when the wounded cry, when the slaughter is made in the midst of thee? Then all the princes of the sea shall come down from their thrones, and lay away their robes, and put off their broidered garments: they shall clothe themselves with trembling; they shall sit upon the ground, and shall tremble at every moment, and be astonished at thee. And they shall take up a lamentation for thee, and say to thee, How art thou destroyed, that wast inhabited of seafaring men, the renowed city, which wast strong in the sea, she and her inhabitants, which cause their terror to be on all that haunt it! Now shall the isles tremble in the day of thy fall; yea, the isles that are in the sea shall be troubled at thy departure. For thus saith the Lord God; When I shall make thee a desolate city, like the cities that are not inhabited; when I shall bring up the deep upon thee, and great waters shall cover thee. When I shall bring thee down with them that descend into the pit, with the people of old time, and shall set thee in the low parts of the earth, in places desolate of old, with them that go down to the pit, that thou be not inhabited; and I shall set glory in the land of the living; I will make thee a terror, and thou shalt be no more; though thou be sought for, yet shalt thou never be found again, saith the Lord God (verses 15-21).

The isles and the princes of the sea were deeply affected by her fall and overthrow. The princes came down from their thrones and laid away their robes and trembled at every moment. The lamentation they took up is on account of the destruction of the renowned city. In Revelation xviii we have a similar lament over the final Babylon, the end in judgment of a godless, materialistic civilization (See Rev. xviii:9-19). Verses 19-20 give a description of the descent of Tyre into the pit. "When I shall make thee desolate, like the cities that are not inhabited; when I shall bring up the deep unto thee, and great waters shall cover thee; when I shall bring thee down with them that descend into the pit, with the people of old time, and shall set thee in the low parts of the earth, in places desolate of old, with them that go down to the pit, that thou be not inhabited; and I shall set glory in the land of the living." The last sentence, which is a promise of glory, can only refer to the coming glory of the earthly Zion, the glory in store for Israel. Boasting, proud Tyrus is laid in the dust; her site completely blotted out. Other nations who hate Israel and continue in the wickedness of those ancient nations will also be broken to pieces, but Zion has a future of glory. When the time of the judgment of the nations comes God will set glory in Israel's land through the coming of the King of Glory. We have already pointed out the literal and startling fulfilment of the last verse of this chapter.

GLORIOUS TYRUS AND HER FALL.

Chapter xxvii.

"The word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Now, thou son of man, take up a lamentation for Tyrus." It is an interesting description of the world-wide commerce and glory of this once-proud world-city, which is given in this chapter. "*Sic transit gloria mundi*"—thus passeth the glory of the world; nothing but ruins instead of the wicked mistress of the sea; yea, her very site is no longer known. And what her glory was and how it passed away under divine displeasure is made known through the inspired prophet. Ezekiel certainly never saw Tyrus, nor did he have probably any knowledge of her grandeur, her great wealth and far-reaching commerce. But he was Jehovah's mouthpiece who put into his lips and pen all these words.

I. The Glory of Tyrus.

The word of the Lord came again unto me, saying, Now, thou Son of man, take up a lamentation for Tyrus. And say unto Tyrus, O thou that art situate at the entry of the sea, which art a merchant of the people for many isles, Thus saith the Lord God; O Tyrus, thou hast said, "I am of perfect beauty." Thy borders are in the midst of the seas, thy builders have perfected thy beauty. They have made all thy ship boards of fir trees of Senir: they have taken cedars from Lebanon to make masts for thee. Of the oaks of Bashan have they made thine oars; the company of the Ashurites have made thy benches of ivory, brought out of the isles of Chittim. Fine linen with broidered work from Egypt was that which thou spreadest forth to be thy sail; blue and purple from the isles of Elisha was that which covered thee. The inhabitants of Zidon and Arvad were thy mariners: thy wise men, O Tyrus, that were in thee, were thy pilots. The ancients of Gebal and the wise men thereof were in thee thy calkers; all the ships of the sea with their mariners were in thee to occupy thy merchandise. They of Persia and of Lud and of Phut were in thine army, thy men of war: they hanged the shield and helmet in thee, they set forth thy comeliness. The men of Arvad with thine army were upon thy walls

round about, and the Gammadims were in thy towers: they hanged their shields upon thy walls round about; they have made thy beauty perfect (verses 3-15).

The great city had her situation at the entry of the sea and was the trader for the people of many isles. Lifted up with pride, the powerful city boasted of perfect beauty. "O Tyrus, thou has said, I am of perfect beauty." Beginning with the fourth verse, we have a description of her as a monster ship. The borders in the midst of the seas, the builders perfecting her beauty. The shipboards, the masts and the oars from the oaks of Bashan are mentioned. The Ashurites made benches of ivory for this ship; the ivory was brought from the isles of Chittim (Cyprus, etc.). Fine linen and broidered work from Egypt she spread for sail. The inhabitants of Zidon and Arvad were the sailors and her wise men pilots. It is all in the form of an allegory. Tyrus also had an army gathered from different nations.

Tarshish was thy merchant by reason of the multitude of all kinds of riches; with silver, iron, tin, and lead, they traded in thy fairs. Javan, Tubal, and Meshech, they were thy merchants: they traded the persons of men and vessels of brass in thy market. They of the house of Togarmah traded in thy fairs with horses and horsemen and mules. The men of Dedan were thy merchants; many isles were the merchandise of thine hand: they brought thee for a present horns of ivory and ebony. Syria was thy merchant by reason of the multitude of the wares of thy making: they occupied in thy fairs with emeralds, purple, and broidered work, and fine linen, and coral, and agate. Judah, and the land of Israel, they were thy merchants: they traded in thy market wheat of Minnith, and Pannag, and honey, and oil, and balm. Damascus was thy merchant in the multitude of the wares of thy making for the multitude of all riches; in the wine of Helbon, and white wool. Dan also and Javan going to and fro occupied in thy fairs: bright iron, cassia, and calamus, were in thy market. Dedan was thy merchant in precious clothes for chariots. Arabia, and all the princes of Kedar, they occupied with thee in lambs, and rams, and goats: in these were they thy merchants. The merchandise

of Sheba and Raamah, they were thy merchants: they occupied in thy fairs with chief of all spices, and with all precious stones, and gold. Haran, and Canneh, and Eden, the merchants of Sheba, Asshur, and Chilmad, were thy merchants. These were thy merchants in all sorts of things, in blue clothes, and broidered work, and in chests of rich apparel, bound with cords, and made of cedar, among thy merchandise. The ships of Tarshish did sing of thee in thy market; and thou wast replenished, and made very glorious in the midst of the seas (verses 16-25).

The commerce of Tyrus is next vividly described. The description begins with Tarshish, then of great renown, and ends with mentioning the ships of Tarshish. And what are the articles of commerce mentioned? Silver, iron, tin, lead, slaves, vessels of brass, horses and mules. Then there were horns of ivory and ebony; emeralds, purple and broidered work, fine linen, coral and agate. Wheat of Minni and Pannag, honey, oil and balm; wine of Helbon and white wool. Then follow other articles of commerce: bright iron, cassia, calamus and precious cloths for chariots. They also traded in live stock: lambs and rams, and goats, besides spices, precious stones, gold chests of rich apparel, etc. Thus she was replenished and made glorious in the midst of the seas. Another world-city or systems is described in the last book of the Bible, Babylon the great; the articles of her world-wide commerce are also given (Rev. xviii:12-13); it is much like the commerce of ancient Tyrus. Tyrus is a picture of a great world-city: rich, increased in goods, enjoying prosperity and filled with pride. As she passed away with all her glory, so others have crumbled into dust. Equally so will this present Godless civilization, culminating in Babylon the great, pass away under the judgment-stroke of God (Rev. xviii:15-19).

II. The Description of the Fall of Tyrus.

Thy rowers have brought thee into great waters: the east wind hath broken thee in the midst of the seas. Thy riches, and thy

fairs, thy merchandise, thy mariners, and thy pilots, thy calkers, and the occupiers of thy merchandise, and all thy men of war, that are in thee, and in all thy company which is in the midst of thee, shall fall into the midst of the seas in the day of thy ruin. The suburbs shall shake at the sound of the cry of thy pilots. And all that handle the oar, the mariners, and all the pilots of the sea, shall come down from their ships, they shall stand upon the land; And shall cause their voice to be heard against thee, and shall cry bitterly, and shall cast up dust upon their heads, they shall wallow themselves in the ashes: And they shall make themselves utterly bald for thee, and gird them with sackcloth, and they shall weep for thee with bitterness of heart and bitter wailing. And in their wailing they shall take up a lamentation for thee, and lament over thee, saying, What city is like Tyrus, like the destroyed in the midst of the sea? When thy wares went forth out of the seas, thou filledst many people; thou didst enrich the kings of the earth with the multitude of thy riches and of thy merchandise. In the time when thou shalt be broken by the seas in the depths of the waters thy merchandise and all thy company in the midst of thee shall fall. All the inhabitants of the isles shall be astonished at thee, and their kings shall be sore afraid, they shall be troubled in their countenance. The merchants among the people shall hiss at thee; thou shalt be a terror, and never shalt be any more (verses 26-30).

The description of Tyrus as a ship as given in the first part of this chapter is here maintained. Tyrus is to be shipwrecked. The east wind is Nebuchadnezzar, who came against the proud city to accomplish part of her ruin; and Alexander the Great, as we saw in our previous study, completed the work. A comparison with Revelation xviii will bring out the striking correspondency. When finally Babylon the great falls, that coming religious-commercial world-system, with Rome as a center, her fall and desolation, will surely be greater than the fall of Tyrus. For this all is rapidly preparing.

THE PRINCE OF TYRUS.

Chapter xxviii.

The greater part of this chapter is also devoted to Tyrus. This concluding prophecy about Tyrus is the most interesting. It concerns the proud ruler of that city, who is called Prince and also King. But this ruler as Prince and King is typical of another and more sinister being as we learn from this chapter. Tyrus with its earthly glory, wealth and pride, as pointed out in the previous expositions, is the type of the glory of the world, the commercial glory and all connected with it, and clearly foreshadows the final great commercial world-system, Babylon the Great. Inasmuch then as Tyrus foreshadows this, its proud and wicked King is typical of the prince of this world, the one who fell by pride and who is the ruler and god of this age. As the prince of this world he showed to the Lord Jesus Christ all the kingdoms of the world and their glory, and offered all to the Lord. This sinister being and his coming masterpiece, the Antichrist, who is to rule during the end of this age on the earth, are foreshadowed in a striking way in the ruler of Tyrus.

I. The Prince of Tyrus, his Pride and his Doom.

The word of the Lord came again unto me, saying: Son of man, say unto the prince of Tyrus, Thus saith the Lord God; Because thine heart is lifted up, and thou hast said, I am a god, I sit in the seat of God, in the midst of the seas, yet thou art a man, and not God, though thou set thine heart as the heart of God. Behold thou art wiser than Daniel; there is no secret that they can hide from thee. With thy wisdom and with thine understanding thou hast gotten thee riches, and hast gotten gold and silver into thy treasures. By thy great widsom and by thy traffic thou hast increased thy riches, and thine heart is lifted up because of thy riches. Therefore thus saith the Lord God; Because thou hast set thine heart as the heart of God. Behold therefore, I will bring strangers upon thee, the terrible of the nations, and they shall draw their swords

against the beauty of thy wisdom, and they shall defile thy brightness. They shall bring thee down to the pit, and thou shalt die the deaths of them that are slain in the midst of the seas. Wilt thou yet say before him that slayeth thee, I am God? but thou shalt be a man and no god, in the hand of him that slayeth thee. Thou shalt die the deaths of the uncircumcised by the hand of strangers; for I have spoken it, saith the Lord God (verses 1-10).

The Prince of Tyrus who ruled in the days of Ezekiel was, according to the Jewish historian Josephus, Ithobalus, called in the Phoenecian annals Ithobaal II. The description of this character tells us that he was the consummation of the pride and wealth of Tyrus; the awful pride of that city was headed up in him. His heart was so lifted up that he claimed to be a god and that he occupied the seat of God. He also boasted of wisdom greater than the wisdom of Daniel, the captive in Babylon. By his cunning and wisdom, as well as by traffic, he had heaped up riches, and because of these riches he became still more lifted up. Like the prosperous and wealthy king of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar, who gloried in his achievements by saying, "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the Kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honor of my majesty" (Dan. iv:30), the Prince of Tyrus boasted in arrogant pride. Through the prophet, his doom is announced. The Lord God reckons with him, "because thou hast set thine heart as the heart of God." He would bring nations against him and his city, and "they shall bring thee down to the pit, and thou shall die the deaths of them that are slain in the heart of the seas." Instead of having endless being as a god he would die a sudden and violent death. He should die the death of the uncircumcised, typifying vile and wicked men who are far away from God; dying deaths, which means a physical death and that which follows the wicked after death, an eternal separation from God, with conscious punishment.

The language used in describing the Prince of Tyrus is

used elsewhere in the Word of God to describe another one, who is yet to come. We mean the personal Antichrist, the man of sin. The marks of this coming one, Satan's great counterfeit and masterpiece, are always pride, self-exaltation. Daniel described him in the following words: "And the King shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvelous things against the God of gods"* (Dan. xi:36). In the New Testament the coming Antichrist is pictured as follows: "Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God" (2 Thess. ii:4). Comparing these statements with what is said of the Prince of Tyrus we see at once the similarity. The political head of the final form of the times of the Gentiles, the ten Kingdom Empires, the Roman Empire revived, is described in very much the same way. The man that made the earth to tremble, that did shake the Kingdoms (Isaiah xiv:16) said in his heart, "I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God . . . I will be like the Most High" (Isa. xiv:13-14). Here is the same characteristic, a God-defying pride. This has led many expositors to call both of these persons, the wicked actors during the end of the age, the Antichrist. But the one is the head of the Roman Empire, the Prince that shall come; the other is the Antichrist, the beast out of the earth (Rev. xiii:10). Both work together under Satan's control and are energized by Satan, therefore they manifest the

*It is well to state here that Daniel mentions Antichrist but once in his prophecies, in chapter xi:36, etc. The little horn in Dan. vii is the head of the revived Roman Empire; the little horn in Dan. viii was Antiochus Epiphanus, the type of the King of the North who will invade the pleasant land, Palestine, during the time of the great tribulation.

same characteristics. It is evident that the ruler of Tyrus as Prince foreshadows the coming Antichrist, and we have to see next the significance that the ruler of Tyrus is addressed as King and the one who stands behind him.

II. The Lamentations over the King of Tyrus.

> Moreover the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, take up a lamentation upon the king of Tyrus, and say unto him, Thus saith the Lord God; Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty. Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone was thy covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold: the workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee in the day that thou wast created. Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee so; thou was upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire. Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee. By the multitude of thy merchandise they have filled the midst of thee with violence, and thou hast sinned: therefore I will cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God: and I will destroy thee, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire. Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness: I will cast thee to the ground, I will lay thee before kings, that they may behold thee. Thou hast defiled thy sanctuaries by the multitude of thine iniquities, by the iniquity of thy traffick; therefore will I bring forth a fire from the midst of thee, it shall devour thee, and I will bring thee to ashes upon the earth in the sight of all them that behold thee. All they that know thee among the people shall be astonished at thee: thou shalt be a terror, and never shalt thou be any more (verses 11-19).

The Prince and the King are identical, and not different persons as some say. But what is said now of the ruler of Tyrus as king could never be said of a mere human being. Hardly any of the descriptions given in these verses can be applied to the heathen King of Tyrus. The description fits another being, the person who was originally the greatest

and most beautiful creature of God, but has become a fallen creature and the enemy of God. In one word, it is Satan in his original greatness and in his fall who is revealed in connection with the King of Tyrus. Satan was the power behind the throne of the Tyrian King, as Satan is still the god of this age who controls the kingdoms of the world. Inasmuch, then, as Tyrus is a type of the commercial glory of the world, its wealth and pride, foreshadowing the final great world-city or world-system, Babylon, the ruler of Tyrus, spoken of as Prince, foreshadows the Antichrist, while as King, Satan himself stands behind him as the domineering power. The descriptions given of Satan as an unfallen being, show that he was originally a marvelous being, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. From Jude's epistle we learn that even Michael still recognized in him the grandeur of his unfallen past and did not bring a railing accusation against him (Jude verses 8-10). He was in Eden, the garden of God, and every precious stone was his covering. It is a description of Satan's original place and of his great beauty. Furthermore, he was the anointed cherub that covereth; the Lord had set him to be this. As the anointed, divinely chosen cherub he held an exalted position in connection with the government of the throne of God.* Everything shows that this majestic creature possessed a place of great dignity, being "upon the holy mountain of God," walking up and down in the midst of the stones of fire, he was ever present and moving about in the fiery glory of a holy and righteous God. "Thou was perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created till unrighteousness was found in thee." Surely the first part of this verse could never apply to the King of Tyrus nor to any other human;

*For a detailed and excellent exposition of this passage see the book on "Satan," by F. C. Jennings, pp. 43-48.

it is a picture of the unfallen glorious creature of God. But unrighteousness was found in him. He sinned, and as a result divine sentence is pronounced upon him. Yet this sentence in verse 16 is not yet executed. He is not yet cast out in the fullest sense, nor bruised completely, nor is he in the lake of fire. All this is future. God in His all-wise purpose delays the complete execution of this judgment. But the day will come when he, who walked once in the presence of the glory of God, in the midst of the stones of fire, will be cast into the lake of fire, his eternal abode. What was his sin? "Thy heart was lifted up because of thy beauty; thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness." He became puffed up, lifted up with pride (1 Tim. iii:6) on account of his own beauty and brightness. There can be no question, but the person so closely linked with the King of Tyrus is Satan. The passage contains one of the most interesting revelations we have in the Bible of the person and dignity of that fallen being. Verses 18 and 19 show that the King is in view and the fate of his city Tyrus: "I have turned thee to ashes upon the earth in the sight of all them that behold thee."

III. A Prophecy Concerning Zidon.

Again the word of the Lord came unto me saying: Son of man, set thy face against Zidon, and prophesy against it. And say, Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I am against thee, O Zidon; and I will be glorified in the midst of thee: and they shall know that I am the Lord, when I shall have executed judgments in her, and shall be sanctified in her. For I will send into her pestilence, and blood into her streets; and the wounded shall be judged in the midst of her by the sword upon her on every side; and they shall know that I am the Lord. And there shall be no more a pricking brier unto the house of Israel, nor any grieving thorn of all that are round about them, that despiseth them; and they shall know that I am the Lord God. Thus saith the Lord God; When I shall have gathered the house of Israel from the people among whom they are scattered, and shall be sanctified in them in the sight of the heathen, then shall

they dwell in their land that I have given to my servant Jacob. And they shall dwell safely therein, and shall build houses, and plant vineyards; yea, they shall dwell with confidence, when I have executed judgments upon all those that despise them round about them; and they shall know that I am the Lord (verses 20-26).

Zidon (or Sidon) was situated twenty miles north of Tyrus. Like Tyrus she was built offshore on island rocks. For many years Zidon was even more prominent and prosperous than Tyrus. She was burnt after a revolt against Artaxerxes Ochus, 351 B. C., but later rebuilt. See its mention in the New Testament in Mark iii:8, vii:24. Jehovah announces that He would execute judgments in Zidon and thus be glorified and sanctified in her. When a holy God deals in judgments with sin, with individuals and nations, He maintains thereby His holy character. He is light in whom there is no darkness at all and a consuming fire. It has been said that there is no special transgression mentioned why Zidon should be judged. No doubt she was as proud as her sister city Tyrus. But verse 25 tells us the reason; she was a pricking brier to the house of Israel. She sinned against her neighbor, the people of God, and for that judgment came on her. And so can present-day nations not escape judgment for their sins against the Jews. The last two verses are a prophecy relating to Israel's restoration. Needless to say up to this time their restoration has not taken place. The time is given when it will come, when the Lord executes judgment upon the nations. When our Lord comes again these judgments will fall. And how near all this must be when we behold nations filling full the measure of their wickedness and the Jews as a suffering people with faces turned towards their homeland.

PROPHECIES CONCERNING EGYPT.

Chapter xxix.

The predictions about Tyrus and Zidon are followed by the prophecies against Egypt. These prophecies are of even greater interest than those preceding. First Pharaoh and Egypt are addressed; the coming judgment and the desolation of the land is announced. A restoration after forty years is promised when the captivity of Egypt is to be brought again; but the former glory will be departed and Egypt's decline, to be the basest of the kingdoms, is predicted. The King of Babylon is announced as the conqueror of Egypt (chapter xxix). In chapter xxx the destruction of Egypt, her people and her allies, is vividly described; at the close of this chapter the defeat of Pharaoh by Nebuchadnezzar is predicted. In chapter xxxi the King of Egypt is described as a mighty cedar; its fall is foretold as well as the effect of Pharaoh's fall among the nations. Chapter xxxii contains a lamentation over the King of Egypt. In the second half of this chapter, the concluding section of these prophecies against Egypt, we find a solemn dirge over the doomed people. The unseen regions are unveiled and those who enjoyed earthly honors and glory are seen in the place of dishonor, misery and shame.

I. The Prediction of Egypt's Desolation.

In the tenth year, in the tenth month, in the twelfth day of the month, the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, set thy face against Pharaoh king of Egypt, and prophesy against him, and against all Egypt: Speak, and say, Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I am against thee, Pharaoh king of Egypt, the great dragon that lieth in the midst of his rivers, which hath said, My river is mine own, and I have made it for myself. But I will put hooks in thy jaws, and I will cause the fish of thy rivers to stick unto thy scales, and I will bring thee up out of the midst of thy rivers, and all the fish of thy rivers shall stick unto thy scales. And I will leave

thee thrown into the wilderness, thee and all the fish of thy rivers: thou shalt fall upon the open fields; thou shalt not be brought together, nor gathered: I have given thee for meat to the beasts of the field and to the fowls of the heaven. And all the inhabitants of Egypt shall know that I am the Lord, because they have been a staff of reed to the house of Israel. When they took hold of thee by thy hand, thou didst break, and rend all their shoulder: and when they leaned upon thee, thou brakest, and madest all their loins to be at a stand. Therefore thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I will bring a sword upon thee, and cut off man and beast out of thee. And the land of Egypt shall be desolate and waste; and they shall know that I am the Lord: because he hath said, The river is mine, and I have made it. Behold, therefore I am against thee, and against thy rivers, and I will make the land of Egypt utterly waste and desolate, from the tower of Syene even unto the border of Ethiopia. No foot of man shall pass through it, nor foot of beast shall pass through it, neither shall it be inhabited forty years. And I will make the land of Egypt desolate in the midst of the countries that are desolate, and her cities among the cities that are laid waste shall be desolate forty years: and I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations, and will disperse them through the countries (verses 1-12).

The King of Egypt addressed in this prophecy was Pharaoh-Hophra, called in Greek, Apries. He was the grandson of Pharaoh-Necho who defeated King Josiah at Meggido (2 Chronicles xxxv:20-27). King Zedekiah of Judah expected help and relief from Pharaoh-Hophra, when Jerusalem was besieged. The Egyptian army under Hophra advanced through Phoenicia and forced the Chaldeans to raise the siege of Jerusalem (Jer. xxxv:5-7). But the relief was only temporary, for the Egyptian army had to retire. The prophet Jeremiah announced also the doom of Hophra, associating it with Zedekiah's doom: "Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will give Pharaoh-Hophra, King of Egypt, into the hands of his enemies, and into the hand of them that seek his life; as I gave Zedekiah, King of Judah, into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, his enemy, and that sought his life" (Jer. xliv:30).

Here he is called "the great dragon that lieth in the midst of his rivers." He boasts, "My river is mine own and I have made it for myself." The river Nile, with its different branches is meant. Pharaoh is compared to a sea monster, which probably means the crocodile, worshipped by the Egyptians; it was symbolical of power and pride.* But the word "dragon" also reminds us of Satan who is called twelve times in the Book of Revelation the dragon. As we learned from the previous chapter, behind the King of Tyrus stood Satan as master of the great city, and the same being, the dragon, controlled also Pharaoh-Hophra and the land of Egypt. The dragon was worshipped by many ancient nations and is still today the emblem of the Chinese Empire. And the same ungodly self-exaltation which characterized Tyrus and its king, which led to its overthrow and judgment, was shared by the King of Egypt. Proud and blasphemous were his words that he had made the river for himself; he defied God and refused to own his power. Therefore, his judgment is announced which would not alone strike him but all the other inhabitants of the land and all who looked to Egypt for help. "I will leave thee thrown into the wilderness, thee and all the fish of thy rivers (the people of the land); thou shalt fall upon the open field; thou shalt not be brought together nor gathered. I have given thee for meat to the beasts of the field and to the fowls of the heaven." It is a striking allegory. In verses 6 and 7 Israel's sin is mentioned when the people of God turned to this wicked land for help, the land where their forefathers had groaned and suffered such cruelty. Isaiah had solemnly warned against such an alliance (Isaiah xxx:6-7; xxxi:3) and so had Jeremiah (Jer. ii:36; xxxvii:7), Interesting it is to find that the same illustration

*The crocodile was often used on Egyptian seal-rings as well as on Roman coins, which pictured Egypt as a monster crocodile.

of disaster for Israel by trusting in Egypt had been used by the Assyrian officer in addressing Hezekiah: "Now, behold, thou trustest upon the staff of this bruised reed, upon Egypt, on which, if a man lean, it will go into his hand, and pierce it; so is Pharaoh, King of Egypt, unto all that trust on him" (2 Kings xviii:21). And so it was. Egypt gave no help to Israel and only wounded them grievously as a staff which breaks under the weight of him who leaneth upon it—breaks and pierces the hand. Whenever God's people turn to Egypt (the type of the world) for help and form ungodly alliances they do so to their own hurt and shame.

Then follows the explanation of the allegory and, once more, the reason of the coming desolation of Egypt is stated, because the proud King had said, "The river is mine, and I have made it." The entire land of Egypt was to be wasted from one end to the other. It was to become desolate and for the period of forty years it was not to be inhabited. "And I will make the land of Egypt desolate in the midst of the countries that are desolate, and her cities among the cities that are laid waste shall be desolate forty years, and I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations, and will disperse them through the countries" (verse 12).

But have these predictions been fulfilled? Did Egypt pass through a period of forty years' desolation and did a restoration take place after the forty years? Critics claim that these predictions were never literally fulfilled and that Nebuchadnezzar did not invade Egypt during the reign of Hophra. They point to the historical evidence that Amasis followed Hophra as King of Egypt, and under his reign Egypt was in a very flourishing condition. The historian, Herodotus, gives this information and it is fully confirmed by Egyptian records on monuments. But did the prophet Ezekiel predict that Egypt should be invaded by Nebuchadnezzar during the reign of Pharaoh-Hophra? He predicts

that Nebuchadnezzar should conquer Egypt, but the critics have made a serious blunder by overlooking the date of the prophecy in which Nebuchadnezzar's invasion is announced. The chapter under our consideration begins with a definite date. It was in the tenth year when he received the message concerning Hophra; but it was seventeen years later when Nebuchadnezzar's invasion was predicted, in the twenty-seventh year (verse 17). Hophra's doom and the desolation of Egypt was first announced, but the fulfillment came years later. Ezekiel does not state that Hophra should be slain by Nebuchadnezzar, nor does Jeremiah predict this (Jeremiah xlvi:30). Hophra was dethroned by Amasis and later slain.

II. Egypt's Restoration and Future as a Kingdom.

> Yet thus saith the Lord God; At the end of forty years will I gather the Egyptians from the people whither they were scattered: and I will bring again the captivity of Egypt, and will cause them to return into the land of Pathros, into the land of their habitation; and they shall be there a base kingdom. It shall be the basest of the kingdoms, neither shall it exalt itself any more above the nations: for I will diminish them, that they shall no more rule over the nations. And it shall be no more the confidence of the house of Israel, which bringeth their iniquity to remembrance, when they shall look after them: but they shall know that I am the Lord God (verses 13-16).

The future of Egypt after its desolation of forty years is revealed in this paragraph. Nebuchadnezzar's conquest of Egypt follows in the next paragraph. The forty years of desolation, during which the Egyptians were dispersed in different countries are difficult to locate historically. Some apply them altogether to the future. B. W. Newton, in his "Babylon and Egypt," claims that all this will be accomplished in the future. We quote his words: "It will be fearfully smitten; and for forty years after the Millennium has commenced, it will be utterly desolate. No foot of man shall pass through it, nor foot of beast shall pass through it,

neither shall it be inhabited forty years (Ezekiel xxix:11). But, finally, it shall be revived, and together with Israel and Assyria shall receive that wondrous blessing which the concluding verses of the nineteenth of Isaiah describe."* That Egypt will have a future of blessing no careful student of the prophetic Word will deny. Isaiah xix shows its future history, both in judgment and in blessing. Yet the prediction of Ezekiel that Egypt after the forty years of desolation should be the basest of all kingdoms and shall have no more rule, but be in a diminished condition, excludes the application of this prophecy to the coming Millennium. Egypt had such a period of forty years' devastation, though the exact history of it may not be known to us. Prophecy is not learned by historical events, but history is revealed in prophecy. We believe prophecies, not because history has measured up to them, but we believe them because they are the inerrant Word of God. After Egypt's sorrowful forty years' experience and dispersion, this proud country went into a steady decline, and the Word of God was literally fulfilled when it became the basest of kingdoms, so that Israel put confidence no longer in Egypt. After Nebuchadnezzar's raid, Egypt declined and sank lower still under the Persians and the Ptolemies, until she became the granary of Rome. And this degradation has continued throughout the centuries of this age so that Egypt is literally the basest of the kingdoms.† That she will play her part in the future at the close of our age we learn from Daniel's prophecy (Dan. xi:36-45). Egypt will rise into prominence ere long in connection with the present day world conflict.

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*Babylon and Egypt, page 192.

†*Wonders of Prophecy*, by J. Urquhart, gives valuable evidence on the literal fulfillment of Ezekiel's prophecy.

III. The Conquest of Nebuchadnezzar.

> And it came to pass in the seven and twentieth year, in the first month, in the first day of the month, the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon caused his army to serve a great service against Tyrus: every head was made bald and every shoulder was peeled: yet he had no wages, nor his army, for Tyrus, for the service that he had served against it. Therefore thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I will give the land of Egypt unto Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon; and he shall take her multitude, and take her spoil, and take her prey; and it shall be the wages for his army. I have given him the land of Egypt for his labor wherewith he served against it, because they wrought for me, saith the Lord God. In that day will I cause the horn of the house of Israel to bud forth, and I will give thee the opening of the mouth in the midst of them; and they shall know that I am the Lord (verses 17-21).

As already stated, this prophecy is dated seventeen years after the general prediction of Egypt's judgment. That Nebuchadnezzar invaded Egypt after he came against Tyrus is mentioned by Josephus the Jewish historian and also by an Assyrian inscription which gives the record of this campaign as having taken place in the thirty-seventh year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar.* Nothing is said of desolation and captivity in this later prophecy concerning Egypt's conquest. Critics claim that Ezekiel had made a mistake in his former prediction. We quote from the New Century Bible: "Ezekiel evidently saw that his former prophecy was mistaken, and he now expected the defeat, though not necessarily the utter destruction, of Egypt. The difference in detail is noticeable between these verses and the prophecy on Egypt seventeen years earlier." But Ezekiel was not mistaken. There was no need of repeating the pre-

*Nebuchadnezzar's name is given by Ezekiel as Nebuchadrezzar. Both spellings were in vogue. Ezekiel spells the name with "r" and Jeremiah uses both spellings throughout his book.

dicted desolation of Egypt; Nebuchadnezzar executed the work of judgment. He suffered, evidently, disappointment in the siege of Tyrus, the immense wealth of that city he could not touch. And, as he did not get wages from Tyrus, nor for his great army, the Lord, whose instrument in judgment the King of Babylon was, gave him Egypt. Here Nebuchadnezzar found great spoil and vast treasures, which, according to divine appointment, were the wages for his army. When this took place, there came an unrecorded revival in Israel and the prophet gave his message in the midst of them.

EGYPT'S FUTURE DESOLATION.

Chapter xxx.

The destruction of Egypt and her allies is now revealed to the prophet. It is a remarkable prophecy for the predictions concerning the humiliation and desolation of Egypt, the once powerful nation of culture, have found a most interesting fulfillment. The leading cities of Egypt are mentioned, which have long ago been wasted and their magnificent temples have crumbled into dust. In the second half of this chapter the King of Babylon as the executioner of the decrees of God is seen. The sword of judgment was put into Nebuchadnezzar's hand by God, so that he might stretch it out upon the land of Egypt.

I. The Desolation of Egypt and her Allies.

The word of the Lord came again unto me saying: Son of man prophesy and say, Thus saith the Lord God; Howl ye, alas for the day! For the day is near, even the day of the Lord is near, a cloudy day; it shall be the time of the heathen. And the sword shall come upon Egypt, and great pain shall be in Ethiopia, when the slain shall fall in Egypt, and they shall take away her multitude, and her foundations shall be broken down. Ethiopia, and Libya, and Lydia, and all the mingled people, and Chub, and the men

of the land that is in league, shall fall with them by the sword. Thus saith the Lord; They also that uphold Egypt shall fall; and the pride of her power shall come down: from the tower of Syene shall they fall in it by the sword, saith the Lord God. And they shall be desolate in the midst of the countries that are desolate, and her cities shall be in the midst of the cities that are wasted. And they shall know that I am the Lord, when I have set a fire in Egypt, and when all her helpers shall be destroyed. In that day shall messengers go forth from me in ships to make the careless Ethiopians afraid, and great pain shall come upon them, as in the day of Egypt: for, lo, it cometh. Thus saith the Lord God: I will also make the multitude of Egypt to cease by the hand of Nebuchadrezzar, king of Babylon. He and his people with him, the terrible of the nations, shall be brought to destroy the land: and they shall draw their swords against Egypt, and fill the land with the slain. And I will make the rivers dry, and sell the land into the hand of the wicked; and I will make the land waste, and all that is therein, by the hand of strangers: I the Lord have spoken it (verses 1-13).

The prophet's first utterance is concerning the day. "Howl ye! Alas for the day! For the day is near,* even the day of the Lord is near, a cloudy day; it shall be the time of the Gentiles." What day is this? Other prophets mention the day of Jehovah as a day of judgment and wrath when the Lord will deal in His righteousness with the nations of the earth. See Isaiah ii; xiii:6, 9; Joel i:15; ii:1, 11; iii:14; Amos v:18, 20; Obad. 15; Zeph. i:7, 14; Zech. xiv:1, etc. This day in its final meaning is the day on which the Lord Jesus Christ will be visibly revealed from heaven. It is mentioned in the New Testament in 1 Thess. v:2; 2 Thess. ii:2 (where "day of Christ" should be rendered "day of the Lord") and 2 Peter iii:10. This day will bring "man's day" to a close and usher in a new age, when righteousness shall reign as grace reigns now. This day of com-

*This may also be rendered "the day draweth near, even the day of the Lord draweth near."

ing judgment of all nations is seen also here in a prophetic perspective. All previous judgments of nations as announced by God's prophets, nations which sinned against Israel the chosen people, foreshadow *the* one great day, when the times of the Gentiles end in the revealed manner (Dan. ii-34; vii:10-14). What came upon Egypt in the past through divine judgment will happen to the Gentile nations in the future at the close of our age, "when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thess. i:7-8). Ever since the times of the Gentiles began with Nebuchadnezzar the divinely appointed head (Jeremiah xxvii:4-8) this day of the Lord has been drawing near, till now with the stupendous present day events, we can see this day rapidly approaching.

The sword was to fall upon Egypt as well as upon Ethiopia, Libya and Lydia (Hebrew: Phut and Lud, see xxvii:10), and all others who were in league with them. Her foundations were to be broken down and the pride of her power shall come down. All this has come to pass and for many centuries the once powerful and proud Egypt has thus been broken down. From Migdol to Syene (not from the tower of Syene) were they to fall by the sword of the Lord. Verse 7 shows the wide sweep of the judgment, covering the surrounding countries. "And they shall be desolate in the midst of the countries that are desolate, and her cities shall be in the midst of the cities that are wasted." Their desolation was to be a desolation in the midst of desolations. It has come literally true. The surrounding countries shared the desolation of the land itself. She has been rightly called "the land of ruins," a vast burial place of the art, architecture and glory of the past, and her present towns (except Alexandria which cannot be reckoned among the

ancient cities, as it was unknown to the Pharaohs) are, as it were, dwellings among the tombs.

Another remarkable prophecy is found in verse 12: "And I will make the rivers dry, and sell the land into the hand of the wicked, and all that is therein, by the hand of strangers. I the Lord have spoken it." Isaiah also predicted, "The waters shall fail from the sea and the river shall be wasted and become dry" (Isaiah xix:5). The rivers are evidently the many arms of the Nile forming the Delta. This is the case today, and has been so in past centuries, and the arms of the Nile, instead of flowing in their original courses have become ill-smelling pools and marshes. And so was the land sold into the hand of the wicked. Untold sufferings, slavery, outrages of many kinds has been the record of Egypt in its past history.

II. The Destruction of the Cities.

> Thus saith the Lord God: I will also destroy the idols, and I will cause their images to cease out of Noph; and there shall be no more a prince of the land of Egypt; and I will put a fear in the land of Egypt. And I will make Pathros desolate, and will set fire in Zoan, and will execute judgments in No. And I will pour my fury upon Sin, the strength of Egypt; and I will cut off the multitude of No. And I will set fire in Egypt: Sin shall have great pain, and No shall be rent asunder, and Noph shall have distresses daily. The young men of Avon and of Phi-beseth shall fall by the sword; and these cities shall go into captivity. At Tehaphnehes also the day shall be darkened, when I shall break there the yokes of Egypt: and the pomp of her strength shall cease in her: as for her, a cloud shall cover her, and her daughters shall go into captivity. Thus will I execute judgments in Egypt; and they shall know that I am the Lord (verses 13-19).

Their idols and images were to be destroyed so as to reveal their nothingness. So it was many centuries before when Israel was in the house of bondage and the power of God in judgment exposed the things which the Egyptians wor-

shipped. Noph, which is mentioned in verse 13, is Memphis. Memphis was the prominent seat of the worship of Ptah and Apis. It was the great temple city, founded by Menes. What has become of this marvellous city with its magnificent temple structures and carved, colossal images and idols?

Abd-ul-Latif, an Arab traveller, who visited it in the thirteenth century, says: "Its ruins still offer to the eyes of the spectator a collection of wonderful works which confound the intellect, and to describe which the most eloquent man would labor in vain. The longer we look upon the scene, the higher rises the admiration it inspires; and every new glance that we cast upon the ruins reveals a new charm. Scarcely have they awakened a distinct idea in the soul of the spectator, than a still more admirable idea suggests itself; and just as you believe you have gained complete knowledge of them, at that very moment the conviction forces itself on the mind, that what you think you know is still very far from the truth."

But even the magnificent ruins, the mute witnesses of a past glory, are gone. The very site of Noph (Memphis) is now a matter of dispute. Only a few immense carved stones remain in the desert sand. Temples, idols and images are forever gone. The prophet Ezekiel knew undoubtedly of the far-famed city, its influence and power in the religious life of Egypt. How could he announce such utter ruin for that city unless the Lord had revealed it to him and put His own words into his mouth? What a great evidence prophecy is that the Bible is the Word of God! "No," mentioned three times in verses 14-16, is Thebes, the ancient capital of Egypt, called by the Greeks "Diospolis," the City of Jupiter. "No" is also mentioned by Nahum (iii:8). Her ruins bear witness of a past, indescribable splendor. The great Temple of Carnac was there. An authority saith: "The ruins of the temple of

Carnac is the largest and most splendid ruin of which, perhaps, either ancient or modern time can boast. All here is sublime, all majestic. With pain one tears oneself from Thebes. Her monuments fix the traveller's eyes and fill his mind with vast ideas. Beholding colossal figures and stately obelisks which seem to surpass human powers." What a city No, Thebes the capital, must have been! The Lord alone could foretell that it should be rent asunder. The ruins bear witness that God's message was faithfully delivered by Ezekiel. And so was fulfilled, "There shall be no more a prince out of the land of Egypt." No native prince has had complete rule over the land. The other places mentioned are Sin, which is Pelusium, now completely buried in the sand. Aven is Heliopolis, the center of the worship of Ba, the god of the sun. Pi-beseth is Bubastis, where the sacred cats were mummied, likewise a desolation now. Tehaphnehes or Daphnis also passed through the judgment. What a remarkable fulfillment of what the Lord announced through His servant Ezekiel! May we here be reminded in our solemn times that the same omniscient Lord, who knows the end from the beginning, has spoken concerning this age, now closing in its predicted apostasy. Nations today steeped in bloodshed; nations filled with covetousness and hatred; and apostate professing Christendom and the indifferent masses have written over against them the judgment-wrath of the coming King. And He who fulfilled the words spoken through Ezekiel will also fulfill every other prediction uttered by His Holy prophets and apostles.

III. The Work of Nebuchadnezzar.

And it came to pass in the eleventh year, in the first month, in the seventh day of the month, that the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, I have broken the arm of Pharaoh king of Egypt; and, lo, it shall not be bound up to be healed, to put a roller

to bind it, to make it strong to hold the sword. Therefore thus saith the Lord God: Behold, I am against Pharaoh king of Egypt, and will break his arms, the strong, and that which was broken; and I will cause the sword to fall out of his hand. And I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations, and will disperse them through the countries. And I will strengthen the arms of the king of Babylon, and put my sword in his hand; but I will break Pharaoh's arms, and he shall groan before him with the groanings of a deadly-wounded man. But I will strengthen the arms of the king of Babylon, and the arms of Pharaoh shall fall down; and they shall know that I am the Lord, when I shall put my sword into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall stretch it out upon the land of Egypt. And I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations, and disperse them among the countries; and they shall know that I am the Lord (verses 20-26).

The arm of Pharoah, King of Egypt was to be broken completely. No bandage would suffice to make it strong again to hold the sword. It was a break beyond remedy. Jeremiah had received a similar message. "Go up into Gilead, and take balm, O virgin, the daughter of Egypt, in vain shalt thou use many medicines, for thou shalt not be cured" (Jere. xlvi:11). And Jeremiah also announced that Nebuchadnezzar should be used in carrying out the overthrow of Egypt. "The word that the Lord spake to Jeremiah the prophet, how Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, should come and smite the land of Egypt. Declare ye in Egypt, and publish in Migdol, and publish in Noph and in Tehaphnehes, say ye, Stand fast and prepare thee, for the sword shall devour round about thee" (Jere. xlvi: 13-17). Nebuchadnezzar wielded the sword of the Lord. "And they shall know that I am the Lord, when I shall put my sword into the hand of the King of Babylon, and he shall stretch it out upon the land of Egypt." The sovereign God had not only used the King of Babylon to execute His judgments upon Jerusalem, but He had also given other lands into his hands and made him the head of the times

of the Gentiles, typified in his great dream-image by the head of gold. "And now have I given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, the King of Babylon my servant; and the beasts of the field have I given him also to serve him. And all nations shall serve him and his son and his son's son, until the very time of his land come, and then many nations and great Kings shall serve themselves of him" (Jere. xxvii:5-7). The times of the Gentiles are still in force, and when they end Egypt will pass through another judgment to receive afterward the blessings promised through the prophet Isaiah (Isa. xix:18-25).

PHARAOH'S GREATNESS AND HIS OVERTHROW.

Chapter xxxi.

Two more chapters speak of the downfall and judgment of Egypt. First, the fall of Pharoah is described in a parable and then follows the lamentations, a funeral dirge over Pharaoh. The message of the thirty-first chapter has three well defined parts. The King of Egypt, like the Assyrian of the past, is pictured as a great cedar in Lebanon. Then the fall of the tree is shown, and finally the shaking of the nations on account of his fall.

II. The Greatness and Glory of the King of Egypt.

And it came to pass in the eleventh year, in the third month, in the first day of the month, that the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, speak unto Pharaoh king of Egypt, and to his multitude; Whom art thou like in thy greatness? Behold, the Assyrian was a cedar in Lebanon with fair branches, and with a shadowing shroud, and of an high stature; and his top was among the thick boughs. The waters made him great, the deep set him up on high with her rivers running round about his plants, and sent out her little rivers unto all the trees of the field. Therefore his height was exalted above all the trees of the field, and his boughs were multiplied, and his branches became long because of the multitude of waters, when he shot forth. All the fowls of heaven made

their nests in his boughs, and under his branches did all the beasts of the field bring forth their young, and under his shadow dwelt all great nations. Thus was he fair in his greatness, in the length of his branches: for his root was by great waters. The cedars in the garden of God could not hide him: the fir trees were not like his boughs, and the chestnut trees were not like his branches; nor any tree in the garden of God was like unto him in his beauty. I have made him fair by the multitude of his branches: so that all the trees of Eden, that were in the garden of God, envied him (verses 1-9).

The Lord commands the prophet to ask a question of Pharaoh and his multitude: "Whom art thou like in thy greatness?" Then the divine questioner answers and reveals the greatness and glory of Pharaoh. He uses the Assyrian in his past greatness to describe Pharaoh's greatness and glory. Some have applied the prophecy entirely to the Assyrian, as if Ezekiel spoke concerning this northern power altogether. But this is incorrect, for the Assyrian power was then no longer in existence, and the last verse of this chapter shows that Pharaoh is meant. "This Pharaoh and his multitude, saith the Lord God" (verse 18). The description of the Assyrian is given to show that Pharaoh, King of Egypt, is in greatness like the Assyrian who had been dealt with in judgment by Jehovah. The Assyrian, once so powerful and proud, is used as a solemn warning, that the King of Egypt would not be spared, but suffer the same fate. The Cedar in Lebanon is a picture of the greatness of the Assyrian and Pharaoh; its height and wide-spreading branches; it superior place among all the trees are used to symbolize both of them. The Cedar is a most majestic tree, often reaching a great height; the branches are thick and long, spreading out horizontally from the enormous trunk. The Cedar is also employed as a type of the righteous and of Israel. "The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree; he shall grow like a cedar in

Lebanon" (Psalm xcii:12). "His branches shall spread . . . and his smell like Lebanon" (Hos. xiv:6). But here the cedar means human grandeur and national greatness, full of arrogant pride and therefore doomed to be abased. Isaiah in his sublime prophecy on the coming day of the Lord uses thus the cedars of Lebanon: "For the day of the Lord of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up; and he shall be brought low. And upon all the cedars of Lebanon that are high and lifted up, and upon all the oaks of Bashan" (Isa. ii:12-13).

Of interest are the words in the sixth verse: "All the fowls of heaven made their nests in his boughs." The same statement is made in the dream of Nebuchadnezzar, in which the King of Babylon had seen a great tree, "and the fowls of heaven dwelt in the boughs thereof" (Dan. iv:12). And our Lord spoke a parable of the mustard seed which became a tree "so that the birds of the air come and lodged in the branches thereof" (Matt. xiii:32). The fowls mean peoples who associated with Assyria, Egypt and the King of Babylon, while these powers became proud and lifted up. The mustard tree in the parable of our Lord represents the development of Gentile-Christendom as an earthly institution and organization, lifted up like a big tree, and the birds which find shelter there are the symbols of the unclean, the unsaved masses, nominally professing Christians. And God who dealt with the Assyrians, with the King of Egypt, God, who humbled Nebuchadnezzar, will yet deal in His coming great judgments with the Gentile nations of today for their pride and wickedness, as well as with Christendom.

II. The Fall and Desolation of the Tree.

Therefore thus saith the Lord God; Because thou hast lifted up thyself in height, and he hath shot up his top among the thick

boughs, and his heart is lifted up in his height; I have therefore delivered him into the hand of the mighty one of the heathen; he shall surely deal with him: I have driven him out for his wickedness. And strangers, the terrible of the nations, have cut him off, and have left him: upon the mountains and in all the valleys his branches are fallen, and his boughs are broken by all the rivers of the land; and all the people of the earth are gone down from his shadow, and have left him. Upon his ruin shall all the fowls of the heaven remain, and all the beasts of the field shall be upon his branches: To the end that none of all the trees by the waters exalt themselves for their height, neither shoot up their top among the thick boughs, neither their trees stand up in their height, all that drink water: for they are all delivered unto death, to the nether parts of the earth, in the midst of the children of men, with them that go down to the pit (verses 10-14).

Judgment came upon Assyria and was also soon to fall upon Egypt because they were lifted up and defied God. "Because thou hast lifted up thyself in height, and he hath shot up his top among the thick boughs, and his heart is lifted up in his height, I have therefore delivered him into the hand of the mighty one of the nations; he shall surely deal with him; I have driven him out for his wickedness." Behind these nations of the past stood, as we saw in connection with the King of Tyrus (chap. xxviii), the dark shadow of the enemy of God. He is still the master over the nations which act at the close of the times of the Gentiles. Satan's crime is that he was and is lifted up with pride. He fell because he said, "I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God . . . I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High" (Isa. xiv:13-14). And this awful being, the prince of this world, the god of this age, who domineers still over the kingdoms of this world, till he is dethroned by the coming of the Lord, has led in the past and still leads nations into ruin and ripens them for divine judgment through pride and what goes with it, defiance of God. To-

day our boasting, proud, lifted up and God-defiant age, an age which rejects God's best, the Gospel of His Son, is rapidly approaching the threatened judgment, a judgment far more severe than those which overtook Assyria and Egypt.

The one mentioned as "the mighty one of the nations" is Nebuchadnezzar, whom God used to bring judgment upon Egypt, as we learned from the previous chapters. He was the golden head of the image which represents the times of the Gentiles, which may soon take on their final form, the ten kingdoms in the revived Roman Empire (Dan. ii). Nebuchadnezzar also became lifted up and God humbled him for seven years, as God will yet humble the nations of Christendom.* And the judgments of the past, upon Assyria and others is to be a warning to others "to the end that none of all the trees by the waters exalt themselves for their height" (verse 13). But who among the nations is wise and heeds the warnings of God's holy Word? See also Rom. xi:16-24, where Christendom is warned not to boast and not to be high minded.

III. The Overthrow and the Consternation among the Nations as the result of Egypt's fall.

> Thus saith the Lord God; In the day when he went down to the grave I caused a mourning: I covered the deep for him, and I restrained the floods thereof, and the great waters were stayed: and I caused Lebanon to mourn for him, and all the trees of the field fainted for him. I made the nations to shake at the sound of his fall, when I cast him down to hell with them that descend into the pit: and all the trees of Eden, the choice and best of Lebanon, all that drink water, shall be comforted in the nether parts of the earth. They also went down into hell with him unto them that be slain with the sword; and they that were his arm, that dwelt under his shadow in the midst of the heathen. To whom art thou thus like

*See Exposition of Daniel, by A. C. G., on Dan. iii-vi.

in glory and in greatness among the trees of Eden? yet shalt thou be brought down with the trees of Eden unto the nether parts of the earth: "thou shalt lie in the midst of the uncircumcised with them that be slain by the sword. This is Pharaoh and all his multitude, saith the Lord God" (verses 15-18).

The word "hell," mentioned several times in this paragraph does not mean the lake of fire, the final and eternal abode of the wicked, but the word is "sheol," the abode of the dead, the unknown regions. It does not mean the grave, for which there is another word used in the Hebrew. The grave receives the bodies; but the immaterial part of man, that which has endless being, goes to Sheol, a word which expresses the unseen and unknown. To sheol the wicked and the nations who forget God have been turned (Psalm ix:17) to await their final doom as revealed in Rev. xx:11-15. The fate of Assyria as well as of Egypt inspired the surrounding nations with fear; these nations are mentioned under the figure of trees, "and all the trees of the field mourned for him." The nations shook with terror when the powerful world-power was stripped of all its greatness and passed away. And when Assyria came into sheol and also Egypt, they found other nations there. These are mentioned by the term "all the trees of Eden, the choice and best of Lebanon, all that drink water." These terms are symbolical of human greatness, glory and prosperity. And these once powerful and prosperous nations were "comforted" to find that even Pharaoh would share their fate and the fate of Assyria. It shows that the disembodied state in sheol is not an unconscious state, but one of consciousness. The next chapter, the final one on Egypt's judgment and fate will show us more of this.

LAMENTATION OVER PHARAOH AND THE FUNERAL DIRGE.

Chapter xxxii.

The final prophecy of this section was given almost two years after the message of the previous chapter and about eighteen months after the fall of Jerusalem. First Ezekiel is told to take up a lamentation for Pharaoh and announce for the last time the work of judgment by the sword of the King of Babylon. After that follows another wail, a solemn dirge, over the Egyptian multitudes which have passed into sheol. It is a vivid description of sheol and those who have descended there. This conclusive prophecy was uttered by the prophet a few days after the lamentation over Pharaoh.

I. The Lamentation Over Pharaoh.

And it came to pass in the twelfth year, in the twelfth month, in the first day of the month, that the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, take up a lamentation for Pharaoh king of Egypt, and say unto him, Thou art like a young lion of the nations, and thou art as a whale in the seas: and thou camest forth with thy rivers, and troubledst the waters with thy feet, and fouldest their rivers. Thus saith the Lord God; I will therefore spread out my net over thee with a company of many people; and they shall bring thee up in my net. Then will I leave thee upon the land, I will cast thee forth upon the open field, and will cause all the fowls of the heaven to remain upon thee, and I will fill the beasts of the whole earth with thee. And I will lay thy flesh upon the mountains, and fill the valleys with thy height. I will also water with thy blood the land wherein thou swimmest, even to the mountains; and the rivers shall be full of thee. And when I shall put thee out, I will cover the heaven, and make the stars thereof dark; I will cover the sun with a cloud, and the moon shall not give her light. All the bright lights of heaven will I make dark over thee, and set darkness upon thy land, saith the Lord God. I will also vex the hearts of many people, when I shall bring thy destruction among the nations, into the countries which thou hast not known. Yea, I

will make many people amazed at thee, and their kings shall be horribly afraid for thee, when I shall brandish my sword before them; and they shall tremble at every moment, every man for his own life, in the day of thy fall (verses 1-10).

Pharaoh is addressed as a young lion among the nations. Some have rendered it "a lion of the nations is upon thee," applying it to Nebuchadnezzar; but this is only a paraphrase and not warranted by the Hebrew text. He is also compared again to the dragon or crocodile.* (See xxix:3). What the crocodile does in the rivers and waters, troubling them and stirring up the dirt, fouling the rivers, Pharoah had done among the nations. And now his wicked doings would be arrested; a net would be spread over him with a company of many peoples, who would bring him out of his dominion like a crocodile taken out of the water. He would be cast upon the open field, "and I will cause all the fowls of the heavens to settle upon thee and I will fill the beasts of the whole earth with thee." Then the political destruction of the great land of Egypt is to be fully accomplished, here mentioned in symbolical terms, such as the darkening of the stars, the covering of the sun with a cloud and the withholding of the light from the moon. But while all this has a primary meaning as to Pharaoh and Egypt, these words of judgment also related to that which is yet, and soon to come upon this earth. Egypt is the type of the world as it lieth in the wicked one.

Nations today are doing what Egypt did. These nations, the final actors of the times of the Gentiles, in their inhuman, God and man defying actions, will not be permitted to go on forever. A day comes in which God will deal with them as He dealt with Egypt of old. When that day comes, the day of Jehovah, their complete overthrow will take place

*"A whale in the seas" is an incorrect translation.

as described so frequently in the prophetic Word. Then the great judgment supper of God will take place, when the fowls under heaven are called upon to gather together and feed upon the slain. There is an interesting suggestion between verse 4 of this chapter and Revelation xix:17-18. The same is true when we compare verses 7-8 with Revelation viii:12. Then read Isaiah xiii:10 and Amos viii:9; Joel iii:15 and Matthew xxiv:29. That day announced in these Scriptures and others is rapidly approaching and will bring the complete overthrow of the domineering, autocratic world-powers and the god of this age, who controls them.

II. The Final Announcement of the Sword of Nebuchadnezzar.

> For thus saith the Lord God; The sword of the king of Babylon shall come upon thee. By the swords of the mighty will I cause thy multitude to fall, the terrible of the nations, all of them: and they shall spoil the pomp of Egypt, and all the multitude thereof shall be destroyed. I will destroy also all the beasts thereof from beside the great waters, neither shall the foot of man trouble them any more nor the hoofs of beasts trouble them. Then will I make their waters deep, and cause their rivers to run like oil, saith the Lord God. When I shall make the land of Egypt desolate, and the country shall be destitute of that whereof it was full, when I shall smite all them that dwell therein, then shall they know that I am the Lord. This is the lamentation wherewith they shall lament her: the daughters of the nations shall lament her: they shall lament for her, even for Egypt, and for all her multitude, saith the Lord God (verses 11-16).

The sword of the Lord to fall upon Egypt was the King of Babylon, previously announced in chapters xxix and xxx. At the close of the times of the Gentiles the predicted judgment will not come upon nations through some other nation, but the Lord Himself will appear and fight against the nations who are rebellious against God and against His

anointed (Psa. ii). The stone, which Nebuchadnezzar saw in his dream, will fall and deal its destructive blow; and that stone is the Lord Jesus Christ in His personal Coming. Then the pomp of Egypt, this present age with all its boasted progress and glory, will pass away and the kingdom from above will be set up. "Then shall they know that I am the Lord." It is not a spiritual knowledge, or a knowledge unto salvation, but a knowledge in the judgments which take place.

"It is important to remark one point in this series of prophecies, which commences with the judgment of Jerusalem, the centre of the former system of nations. They are executed with the object of making them all know Jehovah: only in Israel's case there is besides this, the understanding and the special verification of prophecy. See chapter xxiv:24-27, Israel; chapter xxv:5, 7, 11, Ammon and Moab; verses 15-17, especial vengeance on the Philistines; chapter xxvi, Tyre; chapter xxviii:22, Zidon; chapter xxix:19, Egypt; as also chapters xxx:26, xxxii:15. With respect to Edom (chap. xxv:14), it is only said that Edom shall know the vengeance of Jehovah by means of Israel—a further proof that in certain respects this prophecy extends to the last days. These prophecies, then, furnish us in general with the manifestation of Jehovah's power, so as to make Him known to all by the judgments which He executed; already partially realized in the conquests of Nebuchadnezzar, but to be fully accomplished by-and-by in favor of Israel."*

III. The Dirge and Unveiling of the Unseen World.

It came to pass also in the twelfth year, in the fifteenth day of the month, that the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, wail for the multitude of Egypt, and cast them down, even her, and

*Even so the Lord will yet be known to the nations of the earth by His judgments.

the daughters of the famous nations, unto the nether parts of the earth, with them that go down into the pit. Whom dost thou pass in beauty? go down, and be thou laid with the uncircumcised. They shall fall in the midst of them that are slain by the sword: she is delivered to the sword: draw her and all her multitudes. The strong among the mighty shall speak to him out of the midst of hell (sheol) with them that help him: they are gone down, they lie uncircumcised, slain by the sword. Asshur is there and all her company: his graves are about him: all of them slain, fallen by the sword: Whose graves are set in the sides of the pit, and her company is round about her grave: all of them slain, fallen by the sword, which caused terror in the land of the living. There is Elam and all her multitudes round about her grave, all of them slain, fallen by the sword, which are gone down uncircumcised into the nether parts of the earth, which caused their terror in the land of the living; yet have they borne their shame with them that go down to the pit. They have set her a bed in the midst of the slain with all her multitude: her graves are round about him: all of them uncircumcised, slain by the sword: though their terror was caused in the land of the living, yet have they borne their shame with them that go down to the pit: he is put in the midst of them that be slain. There is Meshech, Tubal, and all her multitude: her graves are round about him: all of them uncircumcised, slain by the sword, though they caused their terror in the land of the living. And they shall not lie with the mighty that are fallen of the uncircumcised, which are gone down to hell with their weapons of war: and they have laid their swords under their heads, but their iniquities shall be upon their bones, though they were the terror of the mighty in the land of the living. Yea, thou shalt be broken in the midst of the uncircumcised, and shalt lie with them that are slain with the sword. There is Edom, her kings, and all her princes, which with their might are laid by them that were slain by the sword: they shall lie with the uncircumcised, and with them that go down to the pit. There be the princes of the north, all of them, and all the Zidonians, which are gone down with the slain; with their terror they are ashamed of their might; and they lie uncircumcised with them that be slain by her sword, and bear their shame with them that go down to the pit. Pharaoh shall see them, and shall be comforted over all his multitude, even Pharaoh and all his army slain by the sword, saith the Lord God. For I have caused my terror in the land of the living: and he shall be laid in the midst of the

uncircumcised with them that are slain with the sword, even Pharaoh and all his multitude, saith the Lord God (verses 17-32).

Two weeks after the lamentation over Pharaoh, the prophet uttered this solemn and most impressive elegy over the multitude of Egypt and the heathen nations who have gone into sheol. It has been called a weird Dantesque funeral-march over the whole heathen world; but it is more than that. We look here into sheol and see the nations gathered there, stripped of their glory, in deepest abasement and shame. Their bodies are in the pit, the grave, and their souls in sheol, the unseen regions. God's patience was exhausted with them, the measure of their wickedness became full, then judgments swept them off the earth and they passed away and descended into sheol. And what irony there is connected with it! "Whom dost thou surpass in beauty? Go down and be thou laid with the uncircumcised." And as the King came there with his multitudes, whom did they find there? Asshur, that is Assyria, is mentioned first: "Asshur is there and all her company." She was a cruel, pitiless, destructive power, and now she, who once caused "terror in the land of the living," is helpless, with all her power gone in the unseen world. Elam, Meshech, Tubal, Edom, the princes of the North and the Zidonians are named as being in existence there. Once great powers but now cut off; they lie with the uncircumcised in weakness and disgrace. While in chapter xxxi:16 the dead and gone nations were comforted over Pharaoh who descended into sheol; in this passage Pharaoh, who sees these nations, now is himself comforted as he discovers his former enemies there.

A similar statement about sheol as a place of departed nations, who are nevertheless conscious, is found in the book of Isaiah. There the King of Babylon is seen in his descent into sheol. "Sheol from beneath is moved for

thee to meet thee at thy coming; it stirreth up the dead for thee, all the chieftains of the earth; it hath raised up from their thrones all the Kings of the nations. All they shall speak and say unto thee, Art thou also become weak as we? Art thou become like unto us? Thy pomps are brought down to the grave, and the noise of thy viols, the worm is spread under thee, and the worms over thee?" (Isa. xiv:9-11). Solemn words these are behind which stands the undeniable truth of a conscious and eternal existence of the human race. But only the New Testament Scriptures give the full light upon the future state.

II. PREDICTIONS AFTER THE DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM

Chapter xxxiii-xlviii.

COMMISSIONS. JERUSALEM'S FALL ANNOUNCED.

Chapter xxxiii.

The previous chapter closed the predictions which were uttered by the Prophet before the destruction of Jerusalem, and now we come to the second part of this prophetic book, containing the predictions of Ezekiel after the fall of Jerusalem. And these predictions unfold the great future of Israel, their restoration and national revival, the spiritual blessings in store for them, the invasion of their land by the last enemy, Gog and Magog, their complete overthrow, and the deliverance of His people. After that, in the final nine chapters of this book, the Prophet records the vision of the coming and crowning glory of Israel, as they shall possess it when restored to their land. Here we learn how the departed glory will return and the Prophet describes a great temple and its worship. It is the millennial temple, that coming, earthly house to which the nations shall turn to worship the King. Then the name of Jerusalem will be "Jehovah-shammah"—the Lord is there (xlviii:35). While the predictions uttered by Ezekiel before the fall of Jerusalem have mostly been fulfilled, as we learned in our expositions, the great prophecies which we follow now, given after the fall of the city are still unfulfilled. These predictions are of great importance and of deep interest, for they give God's program for His chosen people, how He will deal with them in His infinite grace and receive them nationally

when the times of the Gentiles are over and He comes again. Because these things are now so very near, and we stand on the threshold of their fulfilment, they are for us of double interest. We shall therefore examine them more closely and also learn from present day events how all is now getting ready for the accomplishment of God's revealed purposes.

In the introductory chapter of this section, Ezekiel as the watchman is commissioned to warn the house of Israel; then the messenger came announcing the fall of Jerusalem; the prophet's lips were unsealed and he was no more dumb, but uttered again the Word of the Lord.

I. The Commission to the Watchman.

Again the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, speak to the children of thy people, and say unto them, when I bring the sword upon a land, if the people of the land take a man of their coasts, and set him for their watchman: If then he seeth the sword come upon the land, he blow the trumpet, and warn the people; then whosoever hearest the sound of the trumpet, and taketh not warning; if the sword come, and take him away, his blood shall be upon his own head. He heard the sound of the trumpet, and took not warning; his blood shall be upon him. But he that taketh warning shall deliver his soul. But if the watchman see the sword come, and blow not the trumpet, and the people be not warned; if the sword come, and take any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at the watchman's hand. So thou, O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me. When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his way to turn from it; if he do not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul (verses 1-9).

The commission to Ezekiel as watchman corresponds to

the same commission as found in the first section of this book. (See chapters iii:16-21.) The watchman is to warn of impending danger by the blowing of the trumpet. If the warning is unheeded, the consequences rest upon the person who rejected the warning. But he that taketh warning shall deliver his soul. And if the watchman is not faithful in sounding the alarm and disaster overtakes some on account of it, their blood will be required at the watchman's hand. Ezekiel was set as a watchman unto the house of Israel. He received the message from the Lord and was to warn them. The divine message was that the wicked should surely die, and if the watchman neglected to deliver that message and warn the wicked he would die, while his blood would be required from the hands of the watchman. But if the wicked was warned and did not act upon the warning, he would die; the faithful watchman had delivered his own soul. Ezekiel was the faithful watchman while the false prophets did not deliver the message and perished with the ungodly. How great then the responsibility of those who are called as watchmen! And how few the faithful ones who deliver the divine warning to the unsaved!

II. Principles of Divine Justice Announced.

Therefore, O thou son of man, speak unto the house of Israel; Thus ye speak, saying, If our transgressions and our sins be upon us, and we pine away in them, how should we then live? Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel? Therefore, thou son of man, say unto the children of thy people, The righteousness of the righteous shall not deliver him in the day of his transgression: as for the wickedness of the wicked, he shall not fall thereby in the day that he turneth from his wickedness; neither shall the righteous be able to live for his righteousness in the day that he sinneth. When I shall

say to the righteous, that he shall surely live; if he trust to his own righteousness and commit iniquity, all his righteousnesses shall not be remembered: but for his iniquity that he hath committed, he shall die for it. Again, when I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; if he turn from his sin, and do that which is lawful and right; If the wicked restore the pledge, give again that he had robbed, walk in the statutes of life, without committing iniquity; he shall surely live, he shall not die. None of his sins that he hath committed shall be mentioned unto him: he hath done that which is lawful and right; he shall surely live. Yet the children of thy people say, The way of the Lord is not equal: but as for them, their way is not equal. When the righteous turneth from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, he shall even die thereby. But if the wicked turn from his wickedness, and to that which is lawful and right, he shall live thereby. Yet ye say, The way of the Lord is not equal. O ye house of Israel, I will judge you every one after his ways (verses 10-20).

The exiles knew that the just wrath of God rested upon them as a nation and that their sins were unforgiven. Therefore they asked "If our transgressions and sins be upon us, and we pine away in them, how should we then live?" They also accused the Lord of inconsistency by saying "the way of the Lord is not equal" (verse 20; see also xviii:25, 29). The answer Jehovah sends them makes known the principles on which He will deal with them individually as a just God. "O ye house of Israel, I will judge you every one after his ways." Judgment rested upon them as a nation but the individual still could turn to the Lord in repentance. What a wonderful declaration it is which is recorded in verse eleven! "Say unto them, as I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" What compassion and mercy! As it was a day of judgment which had come upon them, true repentance was the needed thing. A past

righteousness could not shield them from the judgment if sin had been committed. "As for the wickedness of the wicked, he shall not fall thereby in the day that he turneth from his wickedness." The wicked confessing and forsaking his sin would find mercy and forgiveness, while those who were impenitent would surely die and not live. "None of his sins that he hath committed shall be mentioned unto him; he hath done that which is lawful and right; he shall surely live." And this gracious promise was given in anticipation of the work of the cross, the redemption by the blood of Christ, by which God's righteousness is declared in passing thus over sins of Old Testament believers who turned to God (Rom. iii:25). The principles of Divine justice are summed up in verses 18 and 19: "When the righteous turneth from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, he shall even die thereby. But if the wicked turn from his wickedness, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall live thereby." Needless to say all this must be viewed as under the law-covenant. But their complaint that the way of the Lord is not equal was wrong; it was their way which was not equal. They were to be judged each according to what they had done.

III. The News of Jerusalem's Fall. The Prophet's Mouth Opened.

And it came to pass in the twelfth year of our captivity, in the tenth month, in the fifth day of the month, that one that had escaped out of Jerusalem came unto me, saying, The city is smitten. Now the hand of the Lord was upon me in the evening, afore he that was escaped came; and had opened my mouth, until he came to me in the morning; and my mouth was opened, and I was no more dumb. Then the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, they that inhabit those wastes of the land of Israel speak, saying, Abraham was one, and he inherited the land: but we are many; the land is given us for inheritance. Wherefore say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; Ye eat with the blood, and

lift up your eyes toward your idols, and shed blood: and shall ye possess the land? Ye stand upon your sword, ye work abomination, and ye defile every one his neighbour's wife: and shall ye possess the land? Say thou thus unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; As I live, surely they that are in the wastes shall fall by the sword, and him that is in the open field will I give to the beasts to be devoured, and they that be in the forts and in the caves shall die of the pestilence. For I will lay the land most desolate, and the pomp of her strength shall cease; and the mountains of Israel shall be desolate, that none shall pass through. Then shall they know that I am the Lord, when I have laid the land most desolate because of all their abominations which they have committed (verses 21-29).

At last the long threatened and predicted fall of Jerusalem through Nebuchadnezzar, which had happened months before is announced to the exiles by one who had escaped. The hand of the Lord was then upon the Prophet in the evening, before the messenger had arrived, and had opened his mouth. In chapter xxiv:27 the promise had been given that when he that escaped came, the Prophet should be no more dumb. "In that day shall thy mouth be opened to him which is escaped, and then thou shalt speak, and be no more dumb, and thou shalt be a sign unto them; and they shall know that I am the Lord." This dumbness does not mean that his mouth was silent and did not utter a word, for he prophesied in chapters xxv-xxxii. He was to be dumb as regards Israel and his testimony to his people; the intervening chapters, before the messenger came concerns other nations. And now the messenger had arrived, his mouth is opened again to prophesy concerning Israel. It seems the hand of the Lord was upon Ezekiel from the evening to the morning when the messenger announced "the city is smitten." The words recorded in the first part of this chapter are undoubtedly the prophet's evening discourse, and form an introduction to this section. He is told to rebuke those that inhabit the waste places in the land of

Israel. This is the remnant left in the land by Nebuchadnezzar, to whom the king of Babylon gave Geddaliah as ruler (2 Kings xxv:22). In spite of the great judgment which had come upon Jerusalem and upon the land, this remnant, which remained in the land, was unbroken and exhibited a strange self-confidence. They reasoned in this wise: "Abraham was one and he inherited the land; but we are many; the land is given us for inheritance." But they lacked the faith and righteousness of Abraham, and the Lord uncovers now their false claims and pretensions by showing their moral character. Their hearts were hardened; they lived on in their wicked, vile and idolatrous ways. "And shall ye possess the land?" asks Jehovah. And He answers, "As I live, surely they that are in the waste places shall fall by the sword, and him that is in the open field will I give to the beasts to be devoured, and they that be in the strongholds and in the caves shall die of the pestilence."

IV. Hearers of the Words of the Prophet, and Not Doers.

> Also, thou son of man, the children of thy people still are talking against thee by the walls and in the doors of the houses, and speak one to another, every one to his brother, saying, Come, I pray you, and hear what is the word that cometh forth from the Lord. And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they shew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness. And, lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they hear thy words, but they do them not. And when this cometh to pass (lo, it will come), then shall they know that a prophet hath been among them (verses 30-33).

How deplorable was their condition, listening to the Prophet's words, saying one to the other, "Come, I pray you, what is the word that cometh forth from the Lord."

They took before the Prophet the position as God's people, professing it with their mouths, listening to all the Prophet said and yet refused obedience. With their mouth they showed much love, they spoke nice and pleasant words, but their hearts continued in the evil ways. As the Septuagint version paraphrases it, "because a lie is in their mouth." They were hearers of the words, but not doers. And such is today the sad condition of Christendom. What the Prophet had announced was coming to pass and when it came they would find out that a Prophet had been among them.

And even so today. The mass of professing Christians listen to the Word of God. They remain indifferent. Their hearts and consciences are not touched. But ere long they, too, will find out "that a Prophet hath been among them" and that the Word they rejected and refused to obey will condemn them.

CONCERNING THE SHEPHERDS.

Chapter xxxiv.

This chapter contains the first great prophecy given to Ezekiel after the fall of Jerusalem had been announced. It is a message of comfort and concerns the glorious future of the nation in coming days, when the true shepherd of Israel will appear in their midst. Here we find the majestic "I will" of the Lord, that blessed word of the grace-covenant of a sovereign God. It tells us what Jehovah in infinite mercy will do for His scattered and bleeding people, His own flock, the people who are still beloved for the fathers' sake (Rom. xi:28). How He will gather His scattered sheep, bring them back from their wanderings among the nations, save them, feed them, heal and restore them, give them the true shepherd and make a covenant of peace with His people is now blessedly made known. We shall see

that none of these gracious promises was fulfilled in the return of the remnant from Babylon, nor have these promises been accomplished since then. It all awaits the coming of their Shepherd-King, the true David, the Lord Jesus Christ. The chapter begins with a description of the sheep of Israel in their sad and deplorable condition and an indictment of the false shepherds.

I. The False Shepherds of Israel.

> And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God unto the shepherds; Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! should not the shepherds feed the flocks? Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill them that are fed: but ye feed not the flock. The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost; but with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them. And they were scattered, because there is no shepherd; and they became meat to all the beasts of the field, when they were scattered. My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and upon every high hill; yea, my flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth, and none did search or seek after them (verses 1-6).

The shepherds of Israel were the kings and princes who ruled over the nation and had authority over them. The prophet Jeremiah also received a similar message against these evil shepherds who had spoiled the flock. "Woe be unto the pastors (shepherds) that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! saith the Lord. Therefore thus saith the Lord God of Israel against the pastors that feed my people; ye have scattered my flock, and driven them away, and have not visited them; behold I will visit upon you the evil of your doings, saith the Lord" (Jere. xxiii: 1-2). Shepherds are called to feed the flock; but these shepherds of Israel fed themselves. They were responsible

for the deplorable condition of the flock. They ruled them with force and cruelty. There was no strengthening for those diseased, no healing for the sick, no recovery of them who were lost and driven away. Utterly selfish, they cared not for the sheep of His pasture; they neither feared God nor loved His people. They looked upon the people not as the flock of God, but only as their own to spoil, misuse and domineer over. Therefore, "They were scattered, because there is no shepherd; and they became meat for all the beasts of the field, where they were scattered. My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and upon every high hill; yea my flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth, and none did search or seek after them" (verses 5-6).

Such was the sad condition of the people Israel. And when the Lord Jesus appeared in their midst to seek the lost sheep of the house of Israel, He found them as sheep without a shepherd and He had compassion upon them (Mark vi:34). But they rejected Him and the Shepherd was smitten. Zechariah's prophecy was fulfilled. "Awake, O sword, against my Shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts. Smite the Shepherd and the sheep shall be scattered, and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones" (Zech. xiii:7). The false shepherds, the Pharisees and the Sadducees, were a curse to the people and the leaders were against the Shepherd. They delivered Him into the hands of the Gentiles. And now for nearly 2,000 years the sheep have been scattered and peeled, wandering among the nations of the earth (Luke xxi:24). What is their hope and coming blessing we learn from this great prophecy.*

*What is said in this chapter of the false shepherds who ill-treated the flock of God, His ancient people, may also be applied to the false shepherds, the hirelings in the professing church. See Acts xx:28-35 and 1 Peter v:2-3.

II. The False Shepherds Convicted and Set Aside.

Therefore, ye shepherds, hear the word of the Lord; As I live, saith the Lord God, surely because my flock became a prey, and my flock became meat to every beast of the field, because there was no shepherd, neither did my shepherds search for my flock, but the shepherds fed themselves, and fed not my flock; Therefore, O ye shepherds, hear the word of the Lord; thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I am against the shepherds; and I will require my flock at their hand, and cause them to cease from feeding the flock; neither shall the shepherds feed themselves any more; for I will deliver my flock from their mouth, that they may not be meat for them (verses 7-10).

Jehovah addresses the shepherds and condemns their wicked oppression of His own sheep. He remembers in mercy His flock which has been torn as a prey by their leaders, who acted like the wild beasts of the field. He requires now the flock from their hands and sets the false shepherds aside and announces that He will deliver His sheep. "For I will deliver my flock from their mouth, that they may not be meat for them." The rest of the chapter shows His deliverance and what the Lord will do for His people Israel.

III. The Deliverance of His Flock.

For thus saith the Lord God: Behold, I, even I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out. As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered; so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day. And I will bring them out from the people, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land, and feed them upon the mountains of Israel by the rivers, and in all the inhabited places of the country. I will feed them in a good pasture, and upon the high mountains of Israel shall their fold be: there shall they lie in a good fold, and in a fat pasture shall they feed upon the mountains of Israel. I will feed my flock, and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord God. I will seek that which was lost, and bring again

that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick; but I will destroy the fat and the strong; I will feed them with judgment. And as for you, O my flock, thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I judge between cattle and cattle, between the rams and the he goats. Seemeth it a small thing unto you to have eaten up the good pasture, but ye must tread down with your feet the residue of your pastures? and to have drunk of the deep waters, but ye must foul the residue with your feet? And as for my flock, they eat that which ye have trodden with your feet; and they drink that which ye have fouled with your feet (verses 11-19).

"Behold, I myself, even I, will search for my sheep and will seek them out." Jehovah arises in behalf of His scattered sheep. He will Himself exercise the office of a true shepherd, seeking out His flock. The cloudy and dark day (the times of the Gentiles) is gone and another morning breaks, the morning for which His people have waited so long. What He will do at that time for His scattered sheep is now fully proclaimed. "I will bring them out from the people, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land, and feed them upon the mountains of Israel by the rivers, and in all the inhabited places of the country. I will feed them in a good pasture, and upon the high mountains of Israel shall their fold be; there shall they lie down in a good fold, and in a fat pasture shall they feed upon the mountains of Israel. I will feed my flock, and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord." And all this has not yet come to pass. Some apply these words to the restoration of a remnant from the Babylonian captivity and see no future fulfillment of these promises. It is evident that the returning remnant did not possess these blessings. Others make a spiritual application and claim that it means the church and the blessing which Gentiles will receive as the sheep of Christ. This is the common path which most commentators follow. It needs no lengthy

refutation, for Ezekiel, nor the other prophets know nothing of the church and the "other sheep," Gentiles saved by grace and with believing Jews constituting the one flock (John x:16; Ephesians iii:1-6). This is unrevealed in the Old Testament. These gracious words of promise have not yet been fulfilled, nor will they be fulfilled as long as the church, the body of Christ is being gathered out from all nations. All must wait till God's purpose in this age is accomplished. When the church is complete as to its elect number, when the Lord has come for His saints and the true church has passed from earth into glory, then will the Lord turn in mercy to His people Israel and these promises given by Ezekiel will be fulfilled.

But Jehovah will also feed them in that coming day of blessing with judgment. "I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick; but I will destroy the fat and the strong; I will feed them with judgment." The fat and the strong are the apostates of Israel. He will deal with the flock in judgment. Before He occupies the throne of His glory, when He separates the assembled nations as a shepherd divides the sheep from the goats, He will judge His people Israel. "And as for you, my flock, thus saith the Lord God, Behold I judge between cattle and cattle, between the rams and the he goats." The unbelieving, apostate part of Israel will be cut off by the judgments of the great tribulation, but a God-fearing remnant will be saved. To this remnant the promises will be made good. "And I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all countries whither I have driven them, and will bring them again to their folds, and they shall be fruitful and increase" (Jere. xxiii:3). With this remnant He will make an everlasting covenant. "And I will make an everlasting cove-

nant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me. Yea, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will plant them in this land assuredly with my whole heart and with my whole soul" (Jere. xxxii:40, 41).

IV. The One Shepherd and the Covenant of Peace.

Therefore thus saith the Lord God unto them; Behold, I, even I, will judge between the fat cattle and between the lean cattle. Because ye have thrust with side and with shoulder, and pushed all the diseased with your horns, till ye have scattered them abroad; therefore will I save my flock, and they shall no more be a prey; and I will judge between cattle and cattle. And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd. And I the Lord will be their God, and my servant David a prince among them; I the Lord have spoken it. And I will make with them a covenant of peace, and will cause the evil beasts to cease out of the land: and they shall dwell safely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods. And I will make them and the places round about my hill a blessing; and I will cause the shower to come down in his season; there shall be showers of blessing. And the tree of the field shall yield her fruit, and the earth shall yield her increase, and they shall be safe in their land, and shall know that I am the Lord, when I have broken the bands of their yoke, and delivered them out of the hand of those that served themselves of them. And they shall no more be a prey to the heathen, neither shall the beast of the land devour them; but they shall dwell safely, and none shall make them afraid. And I will raise up for them a plant of renown, and they shall be no more consumed with hunger in the land, neither bear the shame of the heathen any more. Thus shall they know that I the Lord their God am with them, and that they, even the house of Israel, are my people, saith the Lord God. And ye my flock, the flock of my pasture, are men, and I am your God, saith the Lord God (verses 20-31).

We reach the climax in the final section of this chapter. He through whom all this will be accomplished is now men-

tioned by the prophet. "And I will set up one Shepherd over them, and He shall feed them, even my servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd. And I the Lord will be their God, and my servant David a prince among them; I the Lord have spoken it." Some have applied this to Zerubbabel, the head of Judah at the return from the Babylonish captivity; this is done by those who deny a future restoration of Israel. Others take these words in a strictly literal sense and teach that David the King will become the head of the nation once more and raised from the dead will be the one shepherd over His people. It is not David, but He who is according to the flesh the Son of David and David's Lord as well. The one Shepherd can only be the Messiah. Numerous passages show that David's name is used in a typical sense. Jeremiah announced, "They shall serve the Lord their God, and David their King, whom I will raise up unto them" (Jere. xxx:10). Here David stands typically for Christ, the Messiah of Israel, for He is raised up unto them when Jacob's trouble is ended (verses 1-7). Of Him Jeremiah speaks more fully in chapter xxiii:5-6: "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In His days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely; and this is the name whereby He shall be called, the Lord our Righteousness." The two, Judah and Israel, will be reunited by the one Shepherd. The Messiah of Israel is also mentioned by Hosea as David. "Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the Lord their God, and David their King and shall fear the Lord and His goodness in the latter days" (Hosea iii:5). Isaiah speaks of the sure mercies of David and adds, "Behold I have given Him for a witness to the people, a leader (prince) and commander

to the people." It is therefore not David, raised from the dead, but the Prince of Peace, who was here once to seek the lost sheep of the house of Israel and who comes again to save the remnant of His people Israel and to receive the Throne of David (Isaiah ix:6-7).

When the Lord is doing all what is promised here and the remnant has accepted the long rejected Messiah-King, a covenant of peace and blessing will follow. "And I will make with them a covenant of peace, and will cause the evil beasts to cease out of the land, and they shall dwell safely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods. Peace will come to the land and to the whole earth with His Coming. The evil beasts, the Gentile world powers (Dan. vii) will no longer devastate the land. All will be peace and safety so that they can sleep peacefully in the woods. "There shall be showers of blessing" (verse 26). How often a hymn is sung based upon this promise:

"There shall be showers of blessing,
This is the promise of love."

But how few who sing it know that the promise belongs first of all to Israel. When the Lord comes the showers of blessing will be poured forth upon His people and upon all nations. It will be "the times of refreshing" (Acts iii:20). Verses 27 and 28 give a brief description of the millennial Kingdom. Groaning creation will then be delivered and the wild beasts will have their nature changed (compare verse 28 with Isaiah xi:6-9 and Rom. viii:19-22). There is no need to speculate on the meaning of "the plant of renown" which will be raised up. It is none other than He, who, as to His humiliation, is described as "a tender plant" and "as a root out of a dry ground" (Isaiah liii:2). But now He appears in all His glory and becomes the plant of renown. Their shame and suffering will then be over. He will be their God and they will be His people.

THE JUDGMENT OF MOUNT SEIR AND WHAT FOLLOWS.

Chapter xxxv.

This is another judgment message, which is closely related to the coming restoration of Israel. When the Lord is merciful to His people and bestows upon them the promised blessings He will also deal with their enemies in judgment. Edom was the most bitter enemy of Israel, their blood-relation. The judgment threatened here was executed upon Edom; but it has a prophetic meaning of the judgment which is in store for the enemies of God's people when the times of the Gentiles end and God arises in behalf of His suffering and persecuted people.

I. The Judgment of Mount Seir.

Moreover the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, set thy face against mount Seir, and prophesy against it, And say unto it, Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, O mount Seir, I am against thee, and I will stretch out mine hand against thee, and I will make thee most desolate. I will lay thy cities waste, and thou shalt be desolate, and thou shalt know that I am the Lord. Because thou hast had a perpetual hatred, and hast shed the blood of the children of Israel by the force of the sword in the time of their calamity, in the time that their iniquity had an end: Therefore, as I live, saith the Lord God, I will prepare thee unto blood, and blood shall pursue thee: since thou hast not hated blood, even blood shall pursue thee. Thus will I make mount Seir most desolate, and cut off from it him that passeth out and him that returneth. And I will fill his mountains with his slain men; in thy hills, and in thy valleys, and in all thy rivers, shall they fall that are slain with the sword. I will make thee perpetual desolations, and thy cities shall not return: and ye shall know that I am the Lord. Because thou hast said, These two nations and these two countries shall be mine, and we will possess it; whereas the Lord was there: Therefore, as I live, saith the Lord God, I will even do according to thine anger, and according to thine envy which thou hast used out of thy hatred against them; and I will make myself known among

them, when I have judged thee. And thou shalt know that I am the Lord, and that I have heard all thy blasphemies which thou hast spoken against the mountains of Israel, saying, They are laid desolate, they are given us to consume. Thus with your mouth ye have boasted against me, and have multiplied your words against me: I have heard them (verses 1-13).

Mount Seir is mentioned for the first time in Genesis xxxvi:9, as the dwelling place of the Edomites. Seir means "shaggy," an allusion to the rugged character of Idumea. The Edomites and Israelites were descendants of Abraham; Edom from Esau and Israel from Jacob. God told Israel not to forget their relationship to the descendants of Esau. But the Edomites hated Israel. Beautiful were the words which Moses addressed to Edom, when he sent messengers from Kadesh. "Thus saith thy brother Israel, thou knowest all the travail that hath befallen us, how our fathers went down to Egypt and dwelt in Egypt a long time; and the Egyptians evil entreated us, and our fathers; and when we cried unto the Lord, He heard our voice, and sent an angel, and brought us forth out of Egypt, and behold we are in Kadesh, a city in the uttermost of thy border; let us pass, I pray thee through thy land" (Numbers xx:14-17). The Edomites rejected this loving word and forced the Israelites to take another way. More than once did they attack from their mountains the people Israel and slew them. "He did pursue his brother with the sword, and did cast off all pity, and his anger did tear perpetually, and he kept his wrath forever" (Amos i:11). Most scathing is Edom's arraignment through the prophet Obadiah. "For thy violence against thy brother Jacob shame shall cover thee, and thou shalt be cut off forever. In the day that thou stoodest on the other side, in the day that the strangers carried away captive his forces, and foreigners entered into his gates, and cast lots upon Jerusalem, even thou wast one of them. But thou shouldest not have looked on the

day of thy brother in the day that he became a stranger; neither shouldest thou have rejoiced over the children of Judah in the day of their destruction; neither shouldest thou have spoken proudly in the day of distress" (Obad. verses 9-14). Theirs was a perpetual hatred as God speaks here through Ezekiel. Judgment is therefore announced, a judgment which should make their land desolate and extinguish them as a nation. "I will make thee most desolate." "I will lay thy cities waste, and thou shalt be desolate." "Thus will I make mount Seir most desolate." "I will make thee perpetual desolation, and thy cities shall not return." They were a proud, a boasting people, defying God and hating His chosen people. "Thus with your mouth ye have boasted against me, and have multiplied your words against me; I have heard them."

And this threatened judgment has fallen upon Edom's land. Their capital was the great rock city Petra, called Selah in the Bible (2 Kings xiv:7).

It was once a powerful city, which carried on an immense trade; it was, according to ancient historians, the terminus of one of the great commercial routes of Asia. And now in that once so prosperous land an indescribable desolation reigns. Its great commerce has utterly passed away and the doom announced in this chapter has been almost fully accomplished. Yet all this also stands related to a future day when Israel is being delivered and when the Lord will judge Edom and all the nations which hate His people. "The punishment of their iniquity is accomplished, O, daughter of Zion; He will no more carry thee away into captivity; He will visit thine iniquity, O daughter of Edom; He will discover thy sins" (Lam. iv:22). The spirit of hatred, pride, envy and blasphemy mentioned in verses 11-13 is characteristic of the ungodly nations who defy God when the times of the Gentiles end. Of that final

beast which domineers over the earth and persecutes the remnant of Israel, before the Lord comes, it is written, "And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven" (Rev. xiii:6). But as Ezekiel declares concerning these blasphemies spoken against Israel and Israel's Lord, "I have heard them," and He will act, in judgment against all His enemies.

II. The Time of Rejoicing.

> Thus saith the Lord God; When the whole earth rejoiceth, I will make thee desolate. As thou didst rejoice at the inheritance of the house of Israel, because it was desolate, so will I do unto thee: thou shalt be desolate, O mount Seir, and all Idumea, even all of it: and they shall know that I am the Lord (verses 14-15).

The time is coming when the whole earth will rejoice. Moses in his prophetic Song spoke of this: "Rejoice O ye nations, with His people; for He will avenge the blood of His servants, and will render vengeance to His adversaries, and will be merciful unto His land, and to His people" (Deut. xxxii:43). When the Lord comes and delivers His earthly people and brings them back to their land all will be completely reversed. Israel now mourning and suffering will rejoice and all their enemies shall mourn forever, on account of God's righteous judgments. Then will the world know that He is Jehovah.

THE PROMISES OF GRACE.

Chapter xxxvi.

With this chapter the great prophetic utterances of Ezekiel begin which have for a topic the future restoration and blessing of the people Israel. From chapter xxxvi to the end of this book all is unfulfilled. How Jehovah will deal with the enemies of His people in judgment, and then turn in

grace and mercy to His own nation to bless them with spiritual and national blessings is the message of this chapter. In chapter xxxvii we find the vision of the dry bones, typical of the national and spiritual resurrection of Israel. The house of Judah and the house of Israel will be united into one, to dwell in the land of their fathers. The great blessings will then be theirs under the covenant of peace, while the tabernacle of God is in the midst of them and the true King reigns over them. Chapters xxxviii and xxxix show the final enemies of Israel, Gog and Magog, and their complete overthrow. Chapters xl-xlviii are millennial, giving a description of the future temple to be built in Jerusalem, its worship and glory.

I. The Judgment of Israel's Enemies.

Also, thou Son of man, prophesy unto the mountains of Israel, and say, Ye mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord: Thus saith the Lord God; Because the enemy hath said against you, Aha, even the ancient high places are ours in possession: Therefore prophesy and say, Thus saith the Lord God; Because they have made you desolate, and swallowed you up on every side, that ye might be a possession unto the residue of the heathen, and ye are taken up in the lips of talkers, and are an infamy of the people: Therefore, ye mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord God; Thus saith the Lord God; to the mountains, and to the hills, to the rivers, and to the valleys, to the desolate wastes, and to the cities that are forsaken, which became a prey and derision to the residue of the heathen that are round about; Therefore thus saith the Lord God; Surely in the fire of my jealousy have I spoken against the residue of the heathen, and against all Idumea, which have appointed my land into their possession with the joy of all their heart, with despiteful minds, to cast it out for a prey. Prophesy therefore concerning the land of Israel, and say unto the mountains, and to the hills, to the rivers, and to the valleys, Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I have spoken in my jealousy and in my fury, because ye have borne the shame of the heathen: Therefore thus saith the Lord God; I have lifted up mine hand, Surely the heathen that are about you, they shall bear their shame (verses 1-7).

The enemy had spoken blasphemies against the mountains of Israel; the Lord had heard the arrogant language of Edom (xxxv:12-13), and now the prophet is commanded to address the personified mountains of Israel in words of consolation and assurance. Previously he had as God's prophet uttered denunciations against the mountains and high places of Israel (vi:1-7), but now after the time of Israel's chastisement is passed and the dawn of their restoration breaks, the Lord turns against the enemies of His people. The enemy had said against them with a shout of exultation: "Aha! even the ancient high places are ours in possession." Edom and other nations knew that the Lord had promised to Israel the land for their possession. They claimed with a proud taunt Israel's mountains and high places as their possession, and thereby ignored God and His covenant with His people. And so it is that the nations have forgotten what God has promised to Israel. Their land and city has been trodden down by the Gentiles. Gentiles have stretched out their hands to possess the mountains of Israel and occupied the land which by covenant belongs to the seed of Abraham. When the times of the Gentiles come to a close nations will once more attempt to take possession of Israel's land and make an invasion. Then the Lord will arise against these nations. Of this Ezekiel speaks. "Surely in the fire of my jealousy have I spoken against the residue of nations, and against all Edom, which have appointed my land unto themselves for a possession with the joy of all their heart, with despiteful minds, to cast it out for a prey; therefore prophesy concerning the land of Israel, and say unto the mountains and to the hills, to the watercourses and to the valleys, Thus saith the Lord God; Behold I have spoken in my jealousy and in my fury, because ye have borne the shame of the nations. Therefore thus saith the Lord God: I have lifted up mine hand, saying,

Surely the nations that are round about you, they shall bear their shame."

Jehovah speaks of Israel's land as "my land," and in holy indignation and jealous for His people and their land, He arises now to put judgment and shame upon the nations which reproached Him. He lifts His hand in token of an oath, that He will do this now. His time has come to be merciful to His people and His land, and that will mean judgment for their enemies (See Zech. i:13-19). And that time is not far distant now when God will turn to His ancient people in mercy and put judgment upon the nations which have forgotten God and ignored His infallible word and revealed purposes.

II. The Promised Return to the Land.

But ye, O mountains of Israel, ye shall shoot forth your branches, and yield your fruit to my people of Israel; for they are at hand to come. For, behold, I am for you, and I will turn unto you, and ye shall be tilled and sown: And I will multiply men upon you, all the house of Israel, even all of it: and the cities shall be inhabited, and the wastes shall be builded: And I will multiply upon you man and beast; and they shall increase and bring fruit: and I will settle you after your old estates, and will do better unto you than at your beginnings: and ye shall know that I am the Lord. Yea, I will cause men to walk upon you, even my people Israel; and they shall possess thee and thou shalt be their inheritance, and thou shalt no more henceforth bereave them of men. Thus saith the Lord God; Because they say unto you, Thou land devourest up men, and hast bereaved thy nations; Therefore thou shalt devour men no more, neither bereave thy nations any more, saith the Lord God. Neither will I cause men to hear in thee the shame of the heathen any more, neither shalt thou bear the reproach of the people any more, neither shalt thou cause thy nations to fall any more, saith the Lord God (verses 8-15).

The address is still to the mountains of Israel. These are beautiful words which Jehovah, to comfort His people, puts into the lips of the prophet. The mountains, so long barren,

would shoot forth their branches and prepare fruit for His people. Then their imminent return is announced: "For they are at hand to come." The near fulfillment was the return of the remnant from the Babylonian captivity. But that does not exhaust this prophecy; there is a greater homecoming in store for Israel, when they will be gathered out of all countries to possess the land and multiply there as they never did in all their past history. "And I will multiply men upon you (the mountains), all the house of Israel, even all of it." No one could claim that this promise found its fulfillment when a small portion of the house of Judah returned from Babylon. Here it speaks of all the house of Israel. And the waste places shall also be builded again as promised by former prophets, for instance in Isaiah lviii:12, lxi:4; Amos ix:11, 12, 14. Still greater is the promise, "I will cause you to be inhabited after the former estate, and will do better unto you than at your beginnings, and ye shall know that I am the Lord." Such was not the case when they returned from Babylon. And what blessing will come to them, when at last God does all these things! "Yea, I will cause men to walk upon you (the mountains), even my people Israel; and they shall possess thee, and thou shalt be their inheritance and thou shalt no more henceforth bereave them of men." All would be changed. Jeremiah had announced, "I will bereave them of children, I will destroy my people since they return not from their ways" (Jere. xv:7). When the Lord keeps His promise and brings them back, their sorrows will be at an end. What are the sorrows and sufferings of the Babylonian captivity in comparison with the sufferings which befell them in the year 70 and throughout this dispensation! And the last page of Israel's sorrow is yet to be written. All is preparing now for the great tribulation, and then there will be the intervention from above, and the coming Lord will wipe away all their

tears. Four times the prophet uses the words "any more" (verses 14-15), "Neither shalt thou bear the reproach of the peoples any more, neither shalt thou cause thy nation to stumble any more, saith the Lord God." Inasmuch as there is reproach now upon that nation and they are a reproach, and that they have stumbled, we know that these words still await their fulfillment.

III. Israel's Past Sins and Chastisement.

Moreover the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, when the house of Israel dwelt in their own land, they defiled it by their own way and by their doings: their way was before me as the uncleanness of a removed woman. Wherefore I poured my fury upon them for the blood that they had shed upon the land, and for their idols wherewith they had polluted it: And I scattered them among the nations, and they were dispersed through the countries: according to their way and according to their doings I judged them. And when they had entered unto the nations, whither they went, they profaned my holy name,when they said to them, These are the people of the Lord, and are gone forth out of his land (verses 16-20).

It needs not lengthy comment to explain this paragraph. The whole history of that nation bears witness to it. They were an unclean, a stiffnecked nation; a nation which rejected His word, yea, Himself, and worshipped idols. But their crowning sin came when they delivered the Lord Jesus Christ, their own Messiah-King, into the hands of the Gentiles. His blood was shed upon the land and they cried, "His blood be upon us and upon our children." And as a result they were scattered among the nations, where they also profaned His holy name (Isaiah lii:5; Rom. ii:24). What then has Israel done to deserve blessing? The rest of the chapter answers this question.

IV. Restoration and Blessing Through Grace.

But I had pity for mine holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the heathen, whither they went. Therefore say

unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord God; I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for mine holy name's sake, which ye have profaned among the heathen, whither ye went. And I will sanctify my great name, which was profaned among the nations, which ye have profaned in the midst of them; and the nations shall know that I am the Lord, saith the Lord God, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes. For I will take you from among the nations, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land. Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them. And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God. I will also save you from all your uncleannesses; and I will call for the corn and will increase it, and lay no famine upon you. And I will multiply the fruit of the tree, and the increase of the field, that ye shall receive no more reproach of famine among the nations. Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations. Not for your sakes do I this, saith the Lord God, be it known unto you: be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel. Thus saith the Lord God: In the day that I shall have cleansed you from all your iniquities I will also cause you to dwell in the cities, and the wastes shall be builded. And the desolate land shall be tilled, whereas it lay desolate in the sight of all that passed by. And they shall say, This land that was desolate is become like the garden of Eden; and the waste and desolate and ruined cities are become fenced, and are inhabited. Then the heathen that are left round about you shall know that I the Lord build the ruined places, and plant that that was desolate; I the Lord have spoken it, and I will do it. Thus saith the Lord God; I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them; I will increase them with men like a flock. As the holy flock, as the flock of Jerusalem in her solemn feasts; so shall the waste cities be filled with flocks of men: and they shall know that I am the Lord (verses 21-38).

The Lord's own name, His holy name, which they profaned among the nations, is what moves Him to act. He tells them that it was not for their sakes, for any merit in them, that He would do the things which His prophet is about to announce. It was His own name as the Lord Who is a covenant keeping God, the holy name they had so miserably outraged, which He must vindicate. The nations were to know, and will yet know, that He is God. He will sanctify His great name, and declares, "I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes." But how? When in infinite grace He deals with this nation and manifests Himself as the loving, covenant-keeping, grace-bestowing Jehovah. And that will be when He, Who died for that nation on the cross (John xii:50-53) Whom they rejected, Whose name they have profaned, returns from His glory-place. Then will His name be sanctified in all the earth, when in wondrous grace He lifts His nation from the dunghill of shame and want and brings them back to their own land.

This is so marvelously promised by Ezekiel. The characteristic word in verses 23-38 is the word "I will." It is the word of sovereign grace. Eighteen times Jehovah saith what He will do. They are the "I wills" of Israel's hope and coming glory.

He will gather them from among the nations and all countries and bring them back to their own land. Only a superficial expositor can speak of a fulfillment when they returned from Babylon. But even if this were so, though it is not, the verses which follow have never been fulfilled in the past. The cleansing of the nation is next promised: "I will sprinkle clean water upon you and ye shall be clean."* It refers us to the water mixed with the ashes of the red-heifer,

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*It is wrong to apply this sentence to water-baptism and claim for it sprinkling as the proper mode of baptism.

which was sprinkled with a hyssop on the unclean, typifying the precious blood of Christ in its cleansing power (Heb. ix: 13-14; x:22). Thus when the people of Israel believe on Him and look upon Him Whom they pierced (Zech. xii:10), they will be cleansed. "In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness" (Zech. xiii:1). Then follows the promise of the new birth of Israel. "A new heart will I also give you, and a new spirit will I put within you." The stony heart is to be taken away and they will receive a heart of flesh. Our Lord had this passage in mind when He talked with Nicodemus about the new birth. Nicodemus, the teacher in Israel, was ignorant of the fact that this new birth for Israel is necessary in order to be in that coming kingdom and to receive its blessings. Therefore the Lord said to him, "If I have told you earthly things (about Israel and the new birth as the way into the kingdom) and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things?" (the heavenly blessings which follow His sacrificial death).

Then follow still greater restoration promises and blessings, which Israel never possessed in their past history nor today. He will be their God and they will be His people. There will be an increase in the corn; famine will disappear forever. The desolate land will be tilled so that those who pass through the land will say: "This land that was desolate is become like the Garden of Eden and the waste and desolate and ruined cities are become fenced, and are inhabited." When this restoration and blessing through grace is accomplished then will they remember their evil ways and loathe themselves for their iniquities and abominations. This will be their national repentance. It is not repentance first, but the Lord will be first gracious and merciful to them, and as a result they will remember their

ways of evil and humble themselves before Him. And the nations round about will know that He who has done all this is Jehovah. All these blessed things will surely be accomplished in the day when the Lord arises and has mercy upon Zion (Psa. cii:13): "I, the Lord have spoken, and I will do it."

THE VISION OF THE DRY BONES.

Chapter xxxvii.

The future restoration of Israel, both their national and spiritual revival, which the Lord announced in the previous chapter, is now shown to the prophet in a remarkable vision. The vision emphasizes once more what Jehovah in grace will do for them. "And I will put my Spirit in you, and ye shall live, and I will place you in your own land" (verse 14). The second half of this chapter predicts the reunion of Judah and Israel represented by two sticks, which are joined together.

I. The Vision of the Dry Bones and their Resurrection.

The hand of the Lord was upon me, and carried me out in the Spirit of the Lord, and set me down in the midst of the valley which *was* full of bones. And caused me to pass by them round about: and, behold, *there were* very many in the open valley; and, lo, *they were* very dry. And he said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord God, thou knowest. Again he said unto me, Prophesy upon these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. Thus saith the Lord God unto these bones, Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live: And I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and ye shall live; and ye shall know that I *am* the Lord. So I prophesied as I was commanded: and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and behold a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone. And when I beheld, lo, the sinews and the flesh came up upon them, and the skin covered them above: but *there was* no breath in them. Then said he unto me, Prophesy unto the wind, prophesy, son of

man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord God; Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live. So I prophesied, as he commanded me, and the breath come into them, and they lived; and Then he said unto me, Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel: behold, they say, Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost: we are cut off for our parts. Therefore prophesy and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. And ye shall know that I *am* the Lord, when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves, And shall put my Spirit in you, and ye shall live, and I shall place you in your own land: then shall ye know that I the Lord have spoken *it*, and performed *it*, saith the Lord (verses 1-14).

Once more the hand of the Lord is upon the prophet, and he is carried out in the Spirit of the Lord and is set down in the midst of a valley. The valley was full of bones and they were very dry. These dry bones, disjointed and bleached, picture in the vision the national and spiritual condition of the whole house of Israel. There was no life in these bones and all is hopeless as they themselves are concerned. Then the Lord spoke to His prophet, "Son of man, can these bones live?" And the prophet answered, "O Lord God, Thou knowest!" Ezekiel knowing the impossibility that these bones could ever live, puts the question of their living upon the Lord. With Him nothing is impossible. He then is commanded to prophesy: "O ye dry bones, hear the Word of the Lord. Thus saith the Lord God unto these bones, Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you and ye shall live." And there is to be a complete reconstruction of these dry bones. Sinews and flesh is to cover them and the breath of life is to return. And the prophet speaks the word and there was a noise (literal: voice) and a commotion, bone came to bone, sinews and flesh came into view and skin covered them; but they were still dead, as no breath was in them. Again the prophet is commanded to

prophecy, to utter the word: "Thus saith the Lord God: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live." No sooner had the prophet spoken the word as commanded, when suddenly the breath came into them, and they lived and stood upon their feet, an exceeding great army. Then the Lord explains the vision, so that we are not left in doubt of what is meant by it. The dry bones are typical of the whole house of Israel; they themselves confess "our bones are dried, and our hope is lost; we are cut off for our parts." Thus saith the Lord in answer to their despairing confession, what the vision so strikingly foreshadows, "I will open your graves and cause you to come up out of your graves and bring you into the land of Israel, . . . and shall put my Spirit in you, and ye shall live, and I shall place you in your own land."

The national resuscitation of the whole house of Israel, the restoration to their own land and the accompanying spiritual revival (though the latter does not fully come into view here) is the meaning of the vision. It may be used in application* in different ways, to illustrate certain truths, but the true and only interpretation is the one which is given by the Lord in verses 11-14. But there is an erroneous interpretation of a serious nature which is widely taught and believed among many Christians. Because "graves" are mentioned, besides the dry bones and their resurrection, it is being taught that the vision means physical resurrection. Systems, like Millennial Dawnism *alias* International Bible Student Association and others, which teach the so-called larger hope, a second chance for the impenitent dead,

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*We heard once a Baptist preacher speak on this vision, and he used the dry bones as a picture of the dead members of his own denomination, and spoke of them as "the dry bones." A Methodist, Presbyterian, etc., might do the same.

the restitution of the lost, teach that all the Israelites who have died in their sins will be brought out of their graves and then be saved. They use this vision to confirm this invention. An advocate of this theory declared that all the Christ-hating Pharisees and Sadducees who lived when our Lord was on earth would be raised up when He comes and then believe on Him. Matthew xxiii:39 was used by him as an argument. These restitution teachers also teach that inasmuch as Israel will have a second chance when they are raised from the dead, the Gentile dead will share also in the same. It needs no argument to refute this. The Word of God teaches a twofold resurrection: a first resurrection and a second resurrection, a resurrection of the just and a resurrection of the unjust (John v:28-29). According to the above theory there would have to be a third resurrection, a resurrection for a second chance and ultimate salvation of those who died in their sins. Of such a resurrection the Bible knows nothing.

In this vision of the dry bones physical resurrection is used as a type of the national restoration of Israel. It is used in the same way in Daniel xii:2. In that passage the sleep in the dust of the earth is symbolical of their national condition. And when their national sleep ends there will be an awakening.* When we read here in Ezekiel of graves it must not be taken to mean literal graves, but the graves are symbolical of the nation as being buried among the Gentiles. If these dry bones meant the physical dead of the nation, how could it be explained that they speak and say, "Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost?" The same figure of speech is used in the New Testament. Of the prodigal it is said, "For this my son was dead, and is alive again" (Luke xv:24). Yet he was not

*See "Exposition of Daniel," by A. C. G., page 200.

physically dead, nor was he made alive physically. Therefore, this vision has nothing whatever to do with a physical resurrection. The late Dr. Bullinger, whose erroneous suggestions have led astray some, also taught that the vision of the dry bones includes resurrection as well as restoration.

Equally bad is that spiritualizing method which takes a vision like this, as well as the hundreds of promises of a coming restoration, and applies it all to the church, ignoring totally the claims of Israel and their promised future of glory. This is the general trend of commentators.

They say that all these visions and promises were exhausted in the return of the remnant from Babylon (less than 43,000 souls) and the spiritual and larger fulfilment is now going on in the church. This method is evil, for it robs the Christian of the true key which unlocks the prophetic Word.

"Their interpretation of prophecy in particular is vitiated by this fatal mistake, which practically razes the hopes of Israel from the Bible and lowers ours to a mere succession to their hope and inheritance with somewhat better light and privilege. It is a part of the first and widest and most tenacious corruption of Christianity against which the apostle fought so valiantly. And it comes in the more insidiously, because it seems to those under its influence that they are of all men the most distant from the false brethren Paul denounced. To their minds the truest guard against Judaizing is to deny that the Jews will ever be reinstated as a people, or be restored consequently to their own land. All the predictions of future blessedness and glory to Israel they turn over to Christendom now or to the church in glory. Most pernicious error! For this is exactly to Judaize the Christian and the church by making them simply follow and inherit from Israel. The truth is thus swamped; Israel's bright prospects are denied; Gentile

conceit is engendered; and the Christian is rendered worldly, instead of being taught his place of blessing on high in contrast with Israel's on the earth."*

II. The Reunion of the Nation and their King.

The word of the Lord came again unto me, saying, Moreover, thou Son of man, take thee one stick, and write upon it, For Judah, and for the children of Israel his companions; then take another stick, and write upon it, For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and *for* all the house of Israel his companions: And join them one to another into one stick; and they shall become one in thine hand. And when the children of thy people shall speak unto thee, saying, Wilt thou not shew us what thou *meanest* by these? Say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I will take the stick of Joseph, which *is* in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel his fellows, and will put them with him, *even* with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, and they shall be one in mine hand. And the sticks whereon thou writest shall be in thine hand before their eyes. And say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and I will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land; and I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all: and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall be they divided into two kingdoms any more at all: Neither shall they defile themselves any more with their idols, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions: but I will save them out of all their dwelling-places, wherein they have sinned and will cleanse them: so shall they be my people, and I will be their God. And David my servant *shall be* king over them; and they all shall have one shepherd: they shall also walk in my judgments, and observe my statutes, and do them. And they shall dwell in the land that I have given unto Jacob my servant wherein your fathers have dwelt; and they shall dwell therein, *even* they, and their children, and their children's children, for ever: and my servant David *shall be* their prince for ever. Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them: and I will place them, and multiply them, and will set

*Wm. Kelly.

my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore. My tabernacle also shall be with them; yea, I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And the heathen shall know that I the Lord do sanctify Israel, when my sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for evermore (verses 15-28).

The prophet is next commanded to demonstrate another coming event for God's ancient people by a symbolical action. He was to take a stick and write on it "for Judah and for the children of Israel his companions." On the second stick, he was to write, "for Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and for all the house of Israel his companions." He was then to join the two sticks so that they became one in his hand. It denotes the reunion of the house of Judah with the house of Israel. The sad division of the nation will end and both will be in His hand one, symbolical of the royal rod or sceptre, which will be in the hand of the Lord in the midst of His redeemed people. The Lord will do all this. "Behold I will take the children of Israel from among the nations whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land. And I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all; and they shall no more be two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all." The house of Israel never returned from the captivity; only a remnant of Judah came back. Since then they have been termed "the lost tribes," though this term is incorrect, for the Epistle of James is addressed to the twelve tribes of Israel. Nothing is lost with God. They are hidden rather, and the time will come when the enigma of the two tribes will be solved. Attempts have been made to locate them but all have failed. The Anglo-Israel theory (that England and America are the lost tribes) is so ridiculous and fantastic that it merits not even an investigation. God has kept track of

them, and when this promised restoration takes place they will be brought to light. Then, reunited as they were under David and Solomon, they will have one King over them. This King is foreshadowed by both David and his son Solomon. As King he is called, "David, my servant," who will be the One Shepherd. And "my servant David, their prince forever." It is the Lord Jesus Christ, the son of David, the true and greater Solomon, the Prince of Peace. How obvious it is that all this does not mean the church. The Lord Jesus Christ is the head of the church in glory, but He is also the King of Israel. When the restoration takes place the angelic message finds its blessed fulfillment: "The Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David, and He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of His Kingdom there shall be no end" (Luke i:32-37). But how can anyone believe that the words of promise given through Ezekiel have no future meaning for the seed of Abraham? Has Israel ever been restored as announced in these words? Have they ever been saved as promised in verse 23? Have they ever walked as a nation in perfect obedience, as stated in the words, "They shall also walk in My judgments, and observe my statutes and do them." And verse 25 promises an abiding dwelling in their land which at this time they do not yet possess. It is the sanctuary of the Lord set up in their midst.

Only when our Lord returns will all this be accomplished. Then will it be true, "My tabernacle also shall be with them; yea, I will be their God and they shall be My people."

GOG AND MAGOG.

Chapter xxxviii.

The great restoration vision of the preceding chapter is followed by another great prophecy concerning the last enemy of Israel, and how the Lord will deliver His people and deal in judgment with the invading hordes. This prophecy is in chapters xxxviii and xxxix. These two chapters are of great interest and demand a careful study; they have been misunderstood by many. Frequently the Gog and Magog have been identified with the final revolt at the close of the millennium, when Satan is loosed for a little season (Rev. xx:7-9). The text shows that this is incorrect. The invasion which Ezekiel describes takes place in the beginning of the millennium; the invasion of Gog and Magog in Revelation is postmillennial. Ezekiel's invasion takes place from the North and the nations are designated; the nations which gather under Satan at the close of the millennium are from the four quarters of the earth. The invaders in Ezekiel's vision fall on the mountains of Israel, while those assembled after the millennium are devoured by fire from heaven.

Others have identified these invading enemies with the nations gathered in the revived Roman Empire. This also cannot be, for we find that the nations Ezekiel names are outside of the territory of the restored Roman Empire. We have to turn to the text itself to find the correct meaning of this prophecy.

I. The Invasion of Israel's Land.

And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, set thy face against Gog, the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal, and prophesy against him, And say, Thus saith the Lord God: Behold, I *am* against thee, O Gog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal: And I will turn thee back, and put hooks into

thy jaws, and I will bring thee forth, and all thine army, horses and horsemen, all of them clothed with all sorts of *armour*, *even* a great company *with* bucklers and shields, all of them handling swords: Persia, Ethiopia, and Libya with them; all of them with shield and helmet: Gomer, and all his bands; the house of Togarmah of the north quarters, and all his bands; *and* many people with thee. Be thou prepared, and prepare for thyself, thou, and all thy company that are assembled unto thee, and be thou a guard unto them. After many days thou shalt be visited: in the latter years thou shalt come into the land *that is* brought back from the sword, *and is* gathered out of many people, against the mountains of Israel, which have been always waste: but it is brought forth out of the nations, and they shall dwell safely, all of them. Thou shalt ascend and come like a storm, thou shalt be like a cloud to cover the land, thou, and all thy bands, and many people with thee. Thus saith the Lord God: It shall also come to pass, *that* at the same time shall things come into my mind, and thou shalt think an evil thought: And thou shalt say, I will go up to the land of unwalled villages; I will go to them that are at rest, that dwell safely, all of them dwellings without walls, and having neither bars nor gates, To take a spoil, and to take a prey; to turn thine hand upon the desolate places *that are now* inhabited, and upon the people *that are* gathered out of the nations, which have gotten cattle and goods, that dwell in the midst of the land. Sheba and Dedan, and the merchants of Tarshish, with all the young lions thereof, shall say unto thee, Art thou come to take a spoil? hast thou gathered thy company to take a prey? to carry away silver and gold, to take away cattle and goods, to take a great spoil? (verses 1-13).

The first question which confronts us in giving an exposition of these verses is, When does this enemy fall into Israel's land? At what time does this invasion take place? We find the answer in the text. The statement is made in verse eight that Gog and Magog and the other nations with them invade the land "that is brought back from the sword, and is gathered out of many people;" they come "against the mountains of Israel, which have always been waste; but it is brought forth out of the nations, and they shall dwell safely, all of them." In verse eleven the evil

purpose of the invader is made known. He says, "I will go up to the land of unwalled villages, I will go to them that are at rest, that dwell safely, all of them dwelling without walls and having neither bars nor gates." He comes "upon the people that are gathered out of the nations, which have gotten cattle and goods, that dwell in the midst of the land" (verse 12). From all this we learn that the invasion takes place at the time when the Lord has brought back His people and resumed His relationship with the remnant of Israel.

The invasion will happen some time after the beastly empire with its beasthead (the revived Roman empire) in its final ten kingdom form and the clay, with the little horn as leader (Dan. vii; Rev. xiii:1-10) and the false prophet, the personal Antichrist (Rev. xiii:11, etc.) have been dealt with in judgment (Rev. xix:19-20). The stone out of heaven has then fallen upon the feet of the great dream image of Nebuchadnezzar, and as far as the Western confederated world power is concerned it is now ended. But other nations gather now for an assault. It is a Northern confederacy which sweeps southward to invade the land as Antiochus Epiphanes did in the past, as well as the Assyrian in the days of Isaiah. These final invading hosts, under the leadership of a powerful king, come like a storm, and like a cloud to cover the land.

In verse 17 we read "Thus saith the Lord God: Art thou he of whom I have spoken in old times by my servants the prophets of Israel, which prophesied in those days for many years that I would bring thee against them?" By the way, in these words we have a very clear statement concerning the prophets of God. They all were the mouthpiece of Jehovah; He has spoken through them. According to this verse other prophets prophesied of the same enemy. Some expositors have stated their inability to find a single

prophecy elsewhere which would confirm Ezekiel's vision and prophecy.

We believe the foe, of whom Isaiah speaks as the Assyrian, foreshadows this one coming with his hordes from the North. The Assyrian in the days of Isaiah, who threatened to cover the land like a cloud, was Sennacherib. How the Lord dealt with him by wiping out his proud army with a single stroke is known to every reader of the Bible. But he also foreshadows the final Assyrian, the last King of the North. He is described in Isaiah x. A significant statement is made in that chapter as to the time when the Lord will deal with this Assyrian of the future. It is this "Wherefore it shall come to pass that when the Lord has performed His whole work upon Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the King of Assyria and the glory of his high looks" (verse 12). When the Lord has performed His work in judgment and in mercy upon Mount Zion and in behalf of Israel and their enemies, then He will also punish the last invader and spoiler of His people, the one foreshadowed by the Assyrian.

The Antichrist, who opposed the heavenly rights and glory of Christ, has then already been overthrown by the brightness of His coming; and next this last enemy who opposeth the earthy rights of the King of kings will also meet his defeat. Notice that in the same chapter of Isaiah the Lord comforts His people in view of the invader, showing thereby that He is with them and on their side. "Therefore, thus saith the Lord God of hosts, O my people that dwelleth in Zion, be not afraid of the Assyrian" (Isa. x:24).

The prophet Micah bears a similar testimony to the same person. In chapter v we have a prophetic announcement of the birth of Christ in Bethlehem Ephrata. We also read of His rejection: "they shall smite the judge of Israel

with a rod upon the cheek." Then the nation is seen as rejected—given up, set aside—till Israel brings forth in travail pains a godly remnant during the end of the age. Then the Lord returns. "And He shall stand and rule in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord His God; and they shall abide, for now shall He be great unto the ends of the earth" (verse 4).

When this has come to pass then the Assyrian appears on the scene, invading the land. But Micah tells us: "And this man (Christ) shall be the peace when the Assyrian shall come into the land" (verse 5). All this confirms the story of Ezekiel xxxviii. The reader may also turn to Isaiah xxxiii, to Joel and find there a description of the same invading forces which Ezekiel describes and their judgment.

But some will find a difficulty here. If the Lord has returned and His people Israel are being gathered to dwell in safety in their own land, if the Lord has revealed His glory, how is it possible that such an invasion can take place? Is not Satan to be bound at once after Christ has come back? And if Satan is put into the pit of the abyss to seduce the nations no more, how is it that these nations are so blind to come up into Immanuel's land to challenge the earthly rights of the King of kings?

Satan will be bound for a thousand years, but the last act by which he attempts to oppose Christ will be through Gog and Magog. The evil thought the leader, the prince of Rosh, thinks (verse 10) is inspired by Satan. He stands behind this wild company of nations and blinds them as he blinded the kings of the Roman Empire and their armies to make war against Him that sat upon the horse. (Rev. xix:19). But then Satan has spent his last arrow. He has completely failed and is then put into the prison for a thousand years to seduce the nations no more. His last

attempt was through the prince of Rosh with the nations mentioned in the beginning of this chapter.

And when the Lord looses him, after the thousand years, he is still the same old devil, as he always will be forever and ever; once more he gets a Gog and Magog, this time from the four quarters of the earth, to put up his very last fight. How that will end we know from Revelation (xx:7-9).

Still another question is raised, and this one in connection with the judgment of the nations, as revealed by our Lord in Matthew xxv:31, etc. After the Lord has returned He will receive His own throne and begin to judge the nations He finds then upon the earth. That this is not what has been termed the final—universal judgment of the quick and the dead—must be apparent to all who divide the Word of Truth rightly. It is the judgment of the living nations. Now the question is asked, if the Lord judges at once all living nations when He comes, how is it that these nations can invade the land? Why were they not also consigned to the place of eternal punishment? Why are they still unjudged?

We do not believe that the judgment of the living nations takes place on a single day. Such a judgment of necessity covers a longer period of time. Nation after nation will have to come up for judgment. This will consume considerable time. There is no question the millennial reign of our Lord will have two sides. There is first the Davidic aspect. He will begin to reign first as David did; His people are with Him and blessed, but all their enemies are not yet subdued and overcome. He will have to rule first with a rod of iron. And then when this final enemy is dealt with, He begins to reign as Prince of Peace, foreshadowed in the Solomonic reign. Gog and Magog, etc., complete and end the judgment of the nations. They are the last enemies to disappear.

After we have ascertained the time when this prophecy

concerning Gog and Magog will be accomplished, we inquire next who this final enemy is. "And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of Man, set thy face against Gog, the land of Magog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal, and prophesy against him, and say, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Behold I am against thee, O Gog, prince of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal. And I will turn thee back, and put hooks into thy jaws, and I will bring thee forth, and all thine army, horses and horsemen, all of them thoroughly equipped, a great assemblage with targets and shields, all of them handling swords. Persia, Cush, and Phut with them, all of them with shield and helmet; Gomer and all his bands; the house of Togormah from the uttermost north, and all his bands—many peoples with thee." Here then we have a confederacy of nations. The leader is the Prince of Rosh (not as the authorized version has it "the chief prince"), of Meshech and Tubal. This prince is the head of the confederacy, and with him allied are Persia, Cush, Phut, Gomer and Togormah. They come out of the north, or, as it is in Hebrews, "out of the uttermost north" (verse 15). Inasmuch as the Prince of Rosh is addressed in verse 3 as Gog, we take it that Gog is the name given to this prince and leader of these nations. His dwelling place is in the land of Magog. We know from Genesis x:2 that Magog was the second son of Japheth. Gomer, Tubal and Meshech were also sons of Japheth; Togormah was a grandson of Japheth, being the third son of Gomer. Magog's land was located in, what is called today, the Caucasus and the adjoining steppes. And the three Rosh, Meshech and Tubal were called by the ancients Scythians. They roamed as nomads in the country around and north of the Black and the Caspian Seas, and were known as the wildest barbarians. We learn from this that the invading forces, which fall into Israel's land in the future, when Israel has been

regathered, come from a territory north of Palestine, which today is in the hands of Russia. And here we call attention to the prince, this northern leader, or king, who is the head of all these nations. He is the prince of Rosh. Careful research has established the fact that the progenitor of Rosh was Tiraz (Gen. x:2) and that Rosh is Russia. All students of Prophecy are agreed that this is the correct meaning of Rosh. The prince of Rosh, means, therefore, the prince or king of the Russian empire. But he also is in control of Meshech and Tubal, which are reproduced in the modern Moscow and Tobolsk.* Russia, we may well conclude from this, will furnish the man who will lead this confederacy of nations. We write this at a time when Russia is passing through horrors upon horrors. A revolution changed the autocratic government into a democracy and that given way to anarchy, produced by the satanic treachery of Germany. From what is written in this chapter we learn that Russia will ultimately return to the old regime and will once more become a monarchy to fulfill her final destiny as made known in this sublime prophecy. Well known it is that Russia has been in the past the most pronounced and bitterest enemy of the Jewish people. What she passes through today is but a fulfillment of what the Lord has spoken: "I will curse them that curse thee." Today the Jews in Russia may have bright hopes of getting their rights and complete emancipation at last. For a time this may come to pass, but ultimately Russia will turn against them and like Pharaoh did, when Israel had left his domain, so this coming King of the North, the prince of Rosh, when Israel is back in the land, will turn against them.

With him come the other nations. Persia, which is even now in part occupied by Russia, will finally be a vassal to

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*The Septuagint translates, "Mesoch and Thobel."

this prince of Rosh. Ethiopia and Phut are also in this confederacy. There also is Gomer and all its bands. Gomer, says Delitsch, "is most probably the tribe of the Cimmerians, who dwell, according to Herodotus, on the Maeotis, in the Taurian Chersonesus, and from whom are descended the Cumri or Cymry in Wales and Britain, whose relation to the Germanic Cimbri is still in obscurity." Valuable information is given in the Talmud; Gomer is there stated to be the Germani, the Germans. That the descendants of the Gomer moved northward and established themselves in parts of Germany seems to be an established fact. All this is of much interest. Germany did not belong to the Roman empire, at least the greater part of Germany was never conquered by Rome. She will therefore not participate in the Western confederacy. Will she then become united to Russia and march under the prince of Rosh into the land of Israel? We cannot be sure about all these things. This, however, we know, that a powerful confederacy of nations, under the leadership of the prince of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal, will come up against Immanuel's land, when Israel has been restored and dwells safely.

II. The Disastrous Defeat of the Invaders.

Therefore, son of man, prophesy and say unto God, Thus saith the Lord God: In that day when my people of Israel dwelleth safely, shalt thou not know *it?* And thou shalt come from thy place out of the north parts, thou, and many people with thee, all of them riding upon horses, a great company, and a mighty army: And thou shalt come up against my people of Israel, as a cloud to cover the land; it shall be in the latter days, and I will bring thee against my land, that the heathen may know me, when I shall be sanctified in thee, O Gog, before their eyes. Thus saith the Lord God: *Art* thou he of whom I have spoken in old time by my servants the prophets of Israel, which prophesied in those days for *many* years that I would bring thee against them? And it shall come to

pass at the same time when Gog shall come against the land of Israel, saith the Lord God, *that* my fury shall come up in my face. For in my jealousy *and* in the fire of my wrath have I spoken. Surely in that day there shall be a great shaking in the land of Israel: So that the fishes of the sea, and the fowls of the heaven, and the beasts of the field, and all creeping things that creep upon the earth, and all the men that *are* upon the face of the earth, shall shake at my presence, and the mountains shall be thrown down, and the steep places shall fall, and every wall shall fall to the ground. And I will call for a sword against him throughout all my mountains, saith the Lord God: every man's sword shall be against his brother. And I will plead against him with pestilence and with blood; and I will rain upon him, and upon his bands, and upon the many people that *are* with him, an overflowing rain, and great hailstones, fire and brimstone. Thus will I magnify myself, and sanctify myself; and I will be known in the eyes of many nations, and they shall know that I *am* the Lord (verses 14-23).

The awful fate of the invaders is now prophetically announced. The prophet is commanded to address Gog. They know that Israel dwelleth safely and they come to take the prey, to carry away silver and gold, cattle and goods and a great spoil (verse 13). The Lord permits it all so that He might be sanctified and magnified by the manifestation of His power in judgment, so that through this judgment the nations might know Him (verses 16, 23). When they come into the land then His fury will come into His face. "For in my jealousy and in the fire of my wrath have I spoken, surely in that day there shall be a great shaking in the land of Israel." The next chapter gives the prophecy of the judgment upon Gog in detail.

THE DEFEAT OF THE INVADERS.

Chapter xxxix.

Once more the prophet is commanded to prophesy against this final invader of Israel's land and to describe the judgment which falls upon the Northern army. This chapter concludes the prophecy of the last enemy of Israel; the concluding

chapters of this book mention no longer enemies, nor Israel's apostasy. They are taken up with the glory of the restoration of the nation and the great millennial temple, the construction, the order of worship, etc.

I. The Judgment and Destruction of Invading Gog.

Therefore, thou son of man, prophesy against Gog, and say, Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I am against thee, O Gog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal: And I will turn thee back, and leave but the sixth part of thee, and will cause thee to come up from the north parts, and will bring thee upon the mountains of Israel: And I will smite thy bow out of thy left hand, and will cause thine arrows to fall out of thy right hand. Thou shalt fall upon the mountains of Israel, thou and all thy bands, and the people that is with thee: I will give thee unto the ravenous birds of every sort, and to the beasts of the field to be devoured. Thou shalt fall upon the open field: for I have spoken it, saith the Lord God. And I will send a fire on Magog, and among them that dwell carelessly in the isles; and they shall know that I am the Lord. So will I make my holy name known in the midst of my people Israel; and I will not *let them* pollute my holy name any more: and the heathen shall know that I *am* the Lord, the Holy One in Israel. Behold, it is come, and it is done, saith the Lord God; this *is* the day whereof I have spoken. And they that dwell in the cities of Israel shall go forth, and shall set on fire and burn the weapons, both the shields and the bucklers, the bows and the arrows, and the handstaves, and the spears, and they shall burn them with fire seven years; so that they shall take no wood out of the field, neither cut down *any* out of the forests; for they shall burn the weapons with fire; and they shall spoil those that spoiled them, and rob those that robbed them, saith the Lord God (verses 1-10).

Jehovah announces now their complete judgment and destruction. The invading hordes are permitted to come upon the mountains of Israel, and like the Assyrian of old, "Shake his hand against the mount of the daughter of Zion, the hill of Jerusalem" (Isa. x:32). Then the Lord will act in behalf of His people. Let us remember that the

Lord is then with His people. His glory is with them and they have found rest and dwell in peace. The blinding power of Satan, who uses Gog and his companions in a final effort to dispute the authority of the King of Kings, is demonstrated by these nations, who, led by the Prince of Rosh (Russia) invade the land. The nations and their kings forming the Western Confederacy were equally blinded when, previous to this final attempt, they made war against the Lord (Rev. xix:19). Jehovah speaks His "I will"; it is the sovereign "I will" in judgment. As He spoke to His people Israel the "I will" of sovereign grace (chapter xxxvi), so now He speaks the word which seals the doom of Israel's last enemy. "And I will turn thee back and lead thee on* and will cause thee to come up from the sides of the north, and will bring thee upon the mountains of Israel." There the invaders are to be smitten. Upon the mountains where the Lord led them and permitted them to come, the hordes shall fall and their carcasses will be given to the ravenous beasts and to the beasts of the field. And those who helped Gog in the wicked endeavor, who dwell securely in the isles, who probably assisted them with ships and in other ways, will also be judged. Fire will be sent upon Magog. It will be a sweeping judgment. As a result of what takes place will be the vindication of His holy Name and both Israel and the nations of the earth shall know Him in that day. "And my holy name will I make known in the midst of my people Israel; neither will I suffer my holy name to be profaned any more; and the nations shall know that I am the Lord, the Holy One in Israel." And what an assuring statement is added: "Behold, it cometh, it shall

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*This is the more satisfactory rendering. The marginal reading, "Strike thee with six plagues" or "draw thee back with a hook of six teeth" is incorrect.

be done, saith the Lord God; this is the day whereof I have spoken."

The weapons the invading hordes left behind will be used for firewood by Israel for seven years. It seems the invaders carried mostly wooden instruments. Perhaps the preceding wars exhausted the metals so that they had to resort to weapons made of wood. Israel shall then spoil those that spoiled them and rob those that robbed them.

II. The Burial of the Slain.

> And it shall come to pass in that day *that* I will give unto Gog a place there of a grave in Israel, the valley of the passengers on the east of the sea; and it shall stop the passengers; and there shall they bury Gog and all his multitude; and they shall call *it* The valley of Hamon-gog. And seven months shall the house of Israel be burying of them, that they may cleanse the land. Yea, all the people of the land shall bury *them*; and it shall be to them a renown the day that I shall be glorified, saith the Lord God. And they shall sever out men of continual employment, passing through the land to bury with the passengers those that remain upon the face of the earth, to cleanse it; after the end of seven months shall they search. And the passengers *that* pass through the land, when *any* seeth a man's bone, then shall he set up a sign by it, till the buriers have buried it in the valley of Hamon-gog. And also the name of the city *shall* be Hamonah. Thus shall they cleanse the land (verses 11-16).

Gog's delusion was to take Israel's land for a possession. Territorial aggrandizement was the motive of the invasion, besides the wicked defiance of God; but instead God gives them graves in the land of Israel. All the multitude of Gog will be buried in the valley of the passengers of the east of the sea, which is the Dead Sea, outside of Israel's territory; that place will be called then "the valley of Hamon-gog," which means "the multitude of Gog." Seven months will it take to put away the bodies of the slain. And those who pass through that region will stop there

to consider the judgment of the Lord which was executed upon Gog. It will be a solemn memorial of what God hath done; even a city will be named on account of the disaster which has come upon Gog, the city Hamonah. The whole land will be cleansed of the defilement. Whenever, after the seven months, one who passes that way sees a man's bones, he shall mark the place with a sign and the buriers will put these bones away in Hamon-gog.

The day will surely come when all these events will come to pass. Much may be obscure at this time but God will see to the fulfilment in His own time. As we have shown in the exposition of the previous chapter, Russia is the leader of this final assault. In these significant days Russia is in the grasp of anarchy. What will be the outcome? Will Russia side with Germany? Will the two form a strong confederacy with other semi-oriental and oriental nations? Are these things, as seen by the prophet at the river banks of Chebar, even now preparing? No mortal man can forecast the immediate future. God alone knows what is about to come.

III. The Sacrifice of Jehovah.

> And, thou son of man, thus saith the Lord God: Speak unto every feathered fowl, and to every beast of the field, Assemble yourselves, and come; gather yourselves on every side to my sacrifice that I do sacrifice for you, *even* a great sacrifice upon the mountains of Israel, that ye may eat flesh, and drink blood. Ye shall eat the flesh of the mighty, and drink the blood of the princes of the earth, of rams, of lambs, and of goats, of bullocks, all of them fatlings of Bashan. And ye shall eat fat till ye be full, and drink blood till ye be drunken, of my sacrifice, which I have sacrificed for you. Thus ye shall be filled at my table with horses and chariots, with mighty men, and with all men of war, saith the Lord God (verses 17-20).

In view of the great slaughter executed upon Gog and his vast army, the feathered fowl and every beast of the field

are summoned to attend the sacrifice which Jehovah has prepared for them upon the mountains of Israel. They are to eat the flesh of the mighty, and drink the blood of the princes of the earth, which are compared to rams, lambs, goats, bullocks and the fatlings of Bashan. He promised these fowls and the beasts of the earth a feast, which will completely satisfy them. The table which is spread for them is His table: "Thus shall ye be filled at my table."

Rev. xix:17, 18 contains a similar scene. It is the great supper of God, which the angel standing in the sun announces, and to which he invites the fowls in the midst of heaven. The great supper in Revelation and Jehovah's sacrifice in Ezekiel are not the same. The great supper of God, that awful judgment supper, is in connection with the beastly empire (the Western Confederacy)—the kings and armies of apostate Christendom. And probably for this reason the fowls in the midst of heaven are only mentioned, because Christendom apostatized from the heavenly testimony of Christianity. These kings and their armies refused and rejected completely the invitation of the Lord to the Gospel-supper and now they will fall in the hands of God and receive their reward at the judgment supper. When Gog falls upon the mountains of Israel, the great supper of God announced in Rev. xix has already been executed.

IV. The Future of Glory.

And I will set my glory among the nations, and all the nations shall see my judgment that I have executed, and my hand that I have laid upon them. So the house of Israel shall know that I *am* the Lord their God from that day and forward. And the nations shall know that the house of Israel went into captivity for their iniquity: because they trespassed against me, therefore hid I my face from them and gave them into the hands of their enemies: so fell they all by the sword. According to their uncleanness and according to their transgressions have I done unto them, and hid

my face from them. Therefore thus saith the Lord God: Now will I bring again the captivity of Jacob, and have mercy upon the whole house of Israel, and will be jealous for my holy name; after that they have borne their shame, and all their trespasses whereby they have trespassed against me, when they dwelt safely in their land, and none made *them* afraid. When I have brought them again from the people, and gathered them out of their enemies' lands, and am sanctified in them in the sight of many nations; then shall they know that I *am* the Lord their God, which caused them to be led into captivity among the heathen: but I have gathered them unto their own land, and have left none of them any more there. Neither will I hide my face any more from them: for I have poured out my spirit upon the house of Israel, saith the Lord God (verses 21-29).

The moral effect of this judgment is described in verses 21-24. The Lord will then establish His glory among the nations. From this we learn that the glory of the Lord will be made known world-wide to cover the earth after this final invasion has come to pass, and this last judgment of nations has been executed. The nations will be the witnesses of this judgment. Of course these nations are those who have been converted and are embodied in the Kingdom of Christ. And then the Lord is vindicated for having dealt with Israel as He did. They went into captivity—the dispersion among all the nations of the earth—on account of their iniquities. God dealt righteously with them when on account of their transgressions He hid His face from them. All God's ways are righteous and in that day all His dealings in judgment will be openly justified.

Then comes the prophecy of the bright future of Israel. It is one of the many found in this book of Ezekiel and the greater number in the other prophetic books. The captivity of Jacob is ended. Mercy will be bestowed upon the whole house of Israel. They have borne their shame; but now it is all ended through the mercy of the Lord. He will bring them again from the peoples, and gather

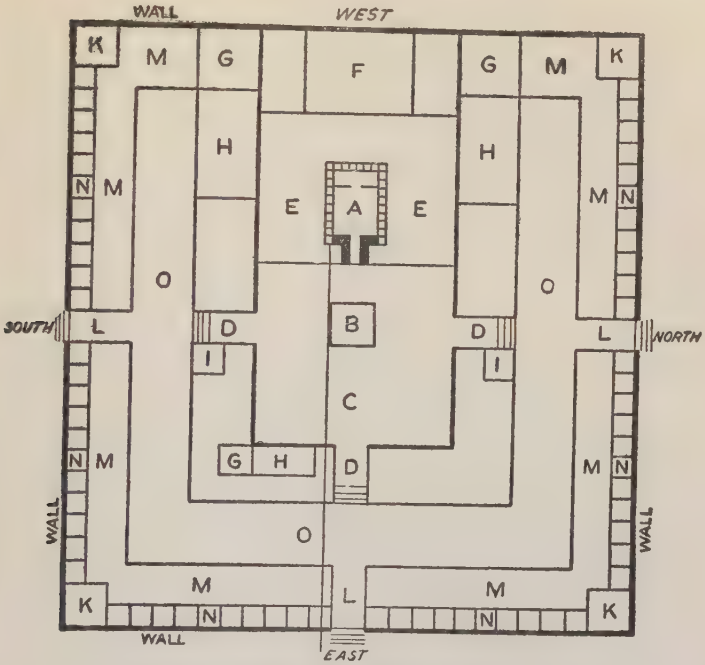
them out of the enemies' lands and sanctify them, by taking away their sins, in the sight of many nations. None will be left behind; all will be gathered back. It is next to inconceivable that, with so many promises in the Word of God as to Israel's future restoration and blessing, that the greater part of professing Christians can ignore these things and refuse to believe in a glorious future of the Jewish race.

The last verse contains an important statement. The Lord says that He hides His face no more from them. This in itself shows that all this is not yet here; for still He hides His face from them. The hiding of His face from them will be no more when His Spirit is poured upon them. "I have poured out my Spirit upon the house of Israel, saith the Lord God." There comes then a time when the house of Israel, the literal descendants of Abraham, will receive an outpouring of the Spirit of God. Such is also the message of Joel, in which restoration and spiritual blessing, through the outpouring of the Spirit are blended together (Joel ii).* We call attention to another passage which should be linked with the statement in this chapter. Isaiah xxxii:13-18 is a very striking prophecy. There is an announcement made first of all concerning the judgment which is to fall upon Israel's land. "Upon the land of my people shall come up thorns and briers; yea, upon all the houses of joy in the joyous city," etc. But this is not to last forever. An "until" follows. "Until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high." This is the same future outpouring of the Spirit of God. Up to now it has not been. The Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost came to form the body of Christ, but this outpouring in connection with Israel has another significance. We read, therefore, in the above passage what

*See "The Prophet Joel," by A. C. G., where this interesting and important chapter is explained in full.

will happen when this outpouring has come to pass. "And the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest. Then judgment shall dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness remain in the fruitful field. And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever. And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places." It is a description of the Kingdom to come, when Israel has found rest and when all the earth will receive the blessing, when righteousness will have given peace, lasting peace to the world.

THE GROUND PLAN OF THE TEMPLE.



GROUND PLAN OF EZEKIEL'S TEMPLE

A. The Temple House, xli.
B. Altar of Burnt Offering, xliii:13.
C. Inner Court.
D. Gates to Inner Court, xl:28.
E. Separate Place, vli:10.
F. Hinder Building, xli:12.
G. Priest's Kitchens, xlvi:19.
H. Chambers for Priests, xlii:1.
I. Chambers, xl:44.
K. People's Kitchen, xlvi:21-24.
L. Gates into Outer Court, xl:6.
M. Pavement, xl:18.
N. Chambers in Outer Court (30) xl:17.
O. Outer Court.
———— Temple Stream.

THE MILLENNIAL TEMPLE AND ITS WORSHIP. THE LAND AND ITS GLORY.

Chapter xl-xlviii.

The final nine chapters of this book form the climax of the great prophecies of Ezekiel; they belong to the most difficult in the entire prophetic Word. Once more the hand of the Lord rests upon the seer and in the visions of God he is brought into the land of Israel. In the very beginning of this grand finale we learn therefore that the visions concern the land of Israel. Let us remember that after the fall of Jerusalem had been announced to Ezekiel (chapter xxxiii:21), his prophetic utterances and visions concern the future when Israel is to be regathered and restored to the land. The previous two chapters dealt with the last invasion of the land of Israel and the complete overthrow of Gog and its hordes. The vision contained in this last section follows after Israel's final deliverance. So much is clear as to the time when the prophecies of these eight chapters will be accomplished. They have not been fulfilled in the past, certainly not in the remnant which returned under Zerubabbel and Ezra. Nor have these prophecies been fulfilled since then. All is future. Only when the Lord has gathered Judah and Israel, when He has established His glorious Kingdom in their midst and delivered His people and the land from the last invader, will this last vision of Ezekiel become history.

This disposes then at once of the different modes of interpretation employed by so many expositors of this book. These are the following:

1. The theory of interpretation which looks upon the vision of these chapters as fulfilled in the return of the remnant from Babylon. One of the expositors who follows this line stated that these visions are "an ideal representation

of the Jewish state about to be restored after the captivity." It does not need much argument to show that this mode of interpretation is erroneous. The temple which the remnant built does in no way whatever correspond with the magnificent structure which Ezekiel beheld in his vision. The fact is, if this temple is a literal building (as it assuredly is) it has never yet been erected. Furthermore, it is distinctly stated that the glory of the Lord returned to the temple and made His dwelling place there, the same glory which Ezekiel had seen departing from the temple and from Jerusalem. But the glory did not return to the second temple. No glory cloud filled that house. And furthermore no high priest is mentioned in the worship of the temple Ezekiel describes, but the Jews after their return from Babylon had high priests again. Nor can the stream of healing waters flowing from the temple as seen by Ezekiel be in any way applied to the restoration from the Babylonian captivity. Expositors who follow this mode of interpretation claim that all has been fulfilled and that there is nothing in store for Israel in the future. It is the most superficial method and totally wrong.

2. Another interpretation claims that the whole vision sprang from the imagination of the prophet. That all is an ideal description of something which the expositor himself is unable to define. This mode of interpretation needs no further mention and answer.

3. The third interpretation of these chapters is the allegorical which spiritualizes everything and claims that the Christian church, its earthly glory and blessing, is symbolically described by the prophet. This is the weakest of all and yet the most accepted. But this theory gives no exposition of the text, is vague and abounds in fanciful applications, while the greater part of this vision is left unexplained

even in its allegorical meaning, for it evidently has no such meaning at all.*

The true interpretation is the literal one which looks upon these chapters as a prophecy yet unfulfilled and to be fulfilled when Israel has been restored by the Shepherd and when His glory is once more manifested in the midst of His people. The great building seen in his prophetic vision will then come into existence and all will be accomplished.

But while we are sure of the strictly future fulfillment of this final vision, the many details which abound in these chapters can hardly be fully interpreted as to their meaning. Much is obscure. That all has a deeper meaning we do not doubt; and here and there we shall offer suggestions, but many things we shall have to pass over. Before we turn to the text and open up the contents of these chapters, a telescopic view of the whole section is in order and will be helpful in our further studies.

We call attention first to the three main divisions.

I. The Description of the Temple. Chapters xl-xlii.

II. The Temple Worship. Chapters xliii-xlvi.

III. The Vision Concerning the Land. Chapters xlvii-xlviii.

Generally these eight chapters are called "The Temple Vision"; but there is much more than the vision of a future temple. We shall see next the contents of these chapters.

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*What strange applications have been made of this vision! We quote from the "New Century Bible" which says concerning this temple: "Its details shed a light nowhere else vouchsafed to us upon the ideals of *Hebrew art*, influenced perhaps, by Babylonian masterpieces, yet entirely national and Puritan; and they embody in material form Ezekiel's sober but intense conception of religion, as completely as the Gothic cathedrals translate into concrete and abiding stone and marble the soaring visions of mediaeval Christianity."(!)

I. The Description of the Temple. Chapters xl-xlii.

Chapter xl.

1. The Introduction. Verses 1-4.
2. The Gate toward the East. Verses 5-16.
3. The Outer Court. Verses 17-27.
4. The Inner Court. Verses 28-37.
5. The Tables for the Offerings and the Chambers for the Inner Court. Verses 38-47.
6. The Porch of the House. Verses 48-49.

Chapter xli.

1. The Holy Place. Verses 1-2.
2. The Most Holy. Verses 3-4.
3. The Side Chambers. Verses 5-11.
4. The Hinder Buildings and the Measurement. Verses 12-14.
5. Description of the Interior of the Temple. Verses 15-26.

Chapter xlii.

1. The Priest's Chambers in the Inner Court. Verses 1-14.
2. The Final Measurements. Verses 15-20.

II. The Temple Worship. Chapters xliii-xlvi.

Chapter xliii.

1. The Return of the Glory of the Lord and Filling the House. Verses 1-9.
2. The Address to the Nation. Verses 10-12.
3. The Dimensions of the Altar. Verses 13-17.
4. The Offerings to be Brought. Verses 18-27.

Chapter xliv.

1. The Outward Eastern Gate for the Prince. Verses 1-3.
2. The Charge concerning the Strangers and the Rebellious Tribes. Verses 4-14.
3. The Charge concerning the Priests, the Sons of Zadok. Verses 15-27.
4. The Inheritance of the Priests. Verses 28-31.

Chapter xlv.

1. The Portions of the Priests, the Levites, of the whole House of Israel and the Prince. Verses 1-8.
2. Concerning the Prince. Verses 9-17.
3. The Feast of Passover and the Feast of Tabernacles. Verses 18-25.

Chapter xlvi.

1. The Worship of the Prince. Verses 1-8.
2. Further Instruction as to Worship. Verses 9-15.
3. Concerning the Prince, his Sons and his Servants. Verses 16-18.
4. A Final Description of places in the Temple. Verses 19-24.

III. The Vision concerning the Land. Chapters xlvii-xlviii.

Chapter xlvii.

1. The Waters of Healing from the Temple. Verses 1-12.
2. Borders of the Land. Verses 13-21.
3. Concerning the Stranger in the land. Verses 22-23.

Chapter xlviii.

1. The Portion of the Seven Tribes. Verses 1-7.
2. The Oblation for the Sanctuary, for the City and for the Prince. Verses 8-29.
3. The Gates of the City and its new Name. Verses 30-35.

THE TEMPLE VISION.

Chapter xl.

The Temple vision is first recorded and the opening verses form the introduction.

I. The Introduction to the Temple Vision.

In the five and twentieth year of our captivity, in the beginning of the year, in the tenth *day* of the month, in the fourteenth year after that the city was smitten, in the selfsame day the hand of the Lord was upon me, and brought me thither. In the visions of God brought he me into the land of Israel, and set me upon a very high mountain, by which *was* as the frame of a city on the south.

And he brought me thither, and, behold, there was a man, whose appearance was like the appearance of brass, with a line of flax in his hand, and a measuring reed; and he stood in the gate. And the man said unto me, Son of man, behold with thine eyes, and hear with thine ears, and set thine heart upon all that I shall shew thee; for to the intent that I might shew them unto thee art thou brought hither: declare all that thou seest to the house of Israel (verses 1-4).

The time of the vision is first given by the prophet. It was in the fourteenth year after Jerusalem had been smitten, which would make the date 572 B. C. The beginning of the year is mentioned. In the Hebrew a word is employed (Rosh hashanah) which is not used again in the Old Testament. In Exodus xii we read "this month shall be unto you the beginnings of months, it shall be the first month of the year to you." (Abib or Nisan.) Some expositors claim that the beginning of the year in Ezekiel's vision was in the month of Nisan commemorating the Passover. But it may mean the seventh month (September-October) the feast of trumpets from which the Jews reckon the new year, and the first day of the month would be the day of atonement. We incline to the latter view. Both the feast of trumpets and the day of atonement foreshadow the regathering of Israel and the forgiveness of their sins. And when that has come, then, and not before, Ezekiel's glory vision will be accomplished in the land. We also read in Lev. xxv:9: "Then shalt thou cause the trumpet of jubilee to sound on the tenth day of the seventh month, in the day of atonement shall ye make the trumpet sound throughout your land." It will be the time of Israel's jubilee when this temple, Ezekiel beheld, will be erected in their land. Once more the hand of the Lord rested upon the prophet. It is the seventh time that this happened to Ezekiel, and not again after this. (See chapters i:3, iii:14-22, vii:1, xxxiii:22, xxxvii:1, xl:1.) In the visions of God the prophet was

brought into the land of Israel, which is conclusive evidence that the vision he is about to receive concerns the people Israel and not, as the spiritualizing, allegorical school of interpreters claim, the church. Ezekiel knew nothing whatever of the church and therefore not a line of all his prophecies could intelligently be applied to the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. He finds himself upon a very high mountain; towards the south he noticed the frame (or building) of a city.* The high mountain is, no doubt, the mountain frequently mentioned in the prophetic Word. "And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills and all nations shall flow unto it" (Isaiah ii:2). "Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion, on the sides of the north the city of the great King" (Psa. xlviii:2). It is the place of His rest (Psa. cxxxii:14), where the King is enthroned (Psa. ii).

Then appeared in the vision the man with the line of flax and the measuring reed. Zechariah beheld such a man with a measuring line in his hand to measure Jerusalem (Zech. ii:13). In Rev. xxi:15 we read of the heavenly Jerusalem, that wonderful city, "and he that talked with me had a golden reed to measure the city and the gates thereof and the wall thereof." And then follows the measurement of the city. The one who measured in Revelation was an angel and the measure was that of an angel. We shall make, when we come to the measurement itself, a brief comparison between the measure mentioned by Ezekiel and the measure of the city in Revelation. And the man with

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*May also be translated "and set me upon a very high mountain, and upon it was as the building of a city, on the south." It will be upon that exalted mountain.

the measuring reed stood in the gate. He addressed the prophet once more as "Son of Man." He was to give attention to all. His eyes were to see, his ears to hear, he should set his heart upon all that would be shown unto him and declare it to the house of Israel.

II. The Eastern Gate.

And behold a wall on the outside of the house round about, and in the man's hand a measuring reed of six cubic long by the cubic and an hand breadth; so he measured the breadth of the building, one reed, and the height, one reed. Then came he unto the gate which looked toward the east, and went up the stairs thereof, and measured the threshold of the gate which was one reed broad; and the other threshold of the gate, which was one reed broad. And every little chamber was one reed long, and one reed broad; and between the little chambers were five cubits; and the threshold of the gate by the porch of the gate within was one reed. He measured also the porch of the gate within, one reed. Then measured he the porch of the gate, eight cubits; and the posts thereof, two cubits; and the porch of the gate was inward. And the little chambers of the gate eastward were three on this side, and three on that side; they three were of one measure; and the posts had one measure on this side and on that side. And he measured the breadth of the entry of the gate, ten cubits; and the length of the gate, thirteen cubits. The space also before the little chambers was one cubit on this side, and the space was one cubit on that side; and the little chambers were six cubits on this side, and six cubits on that side. He measured then the gate from the roof of one little chamber to the roof of another; the breadth was five and twenty cubits, door against door. He made also posts of threescore cubits, even unto the post of the court round about the gate. And from the face of the gate of the entrance unto the face of the porch of the inner gate were fifty cubits. And there were narrow windows to the little chambers, and to their posts within the gate round about, and likewise to the arches; and windows were round about inward; and upon each post were palm trees (verses 5-16).

The house mentioned is the whole building of the Temple. A wall was round about the building. A wall is also men-

tioned in chapter xlii:20 which had a length of five hundred reeds and a breadth of five hundred reeds. The purpose of that wall is stated "to make a separation between that which was holy and that which was common." This wall of five hundred is not identical with the wall in the beginning of the vision as mentioned in verse 5. The wall here surrounded the outer court; the wall in chapter xlii:20 surrounds the whole temple area. That is why the separation between the holy and the common is spoken of with that wall. The length of the great wall which enclosed all the Temple area is not given. But the man in the vision measures the breadth and the height, and as the reed is six cubits we have 2x6 (breadth six cubits and height six cubits), which gives us the number 12. So we meet the number 12, the symbol of divine government on the threshold of this vision. How prominent the number 12 is in the description of the heavenly Jerusalem in the last book of the Bible (Rev. xxi) is known to every reader of that book. The wall there has 12 gates and 12 foundations and is 12x12 cubits high, that is 144 cubits. All is perfection in that heavenly Jerusalem. Here in Ezekiel we have the description of the earthly sanctuary which will be in existence during the millennium. While in Revelation the one who measures is an angel with a golden reed, it is a man in Ezekiel and the cubit he uses (the length of the human forearm from the elbow to the tip of the little finger) has a handbreadth added. The eastern gate, the little chambers, the porch, etc.—everything is measured. The lesson is that even to the details everything is here by divine appointment. If the reed mentioned frequently is taken as six cubits we have in the measure the number 12 several times. Every little chamber (guard houses) was one reed long (six cubits) and six cubits broad—twice 6—12. That all this must have a deeper meaning we doubt not; and yet who can at this time give it to us

in full? These instructions will be literally followed and carried out in the coming day of Israel's restoration.

In these verses we find the wall and its construction, surrounding the outer court of this future temple described. Three gates were seen by the prophet in this wall—an Eastern gate, a Northern gate (verse 10) and a Southern gate (verse 24). The West side of the wall has no gate. As we learn later the returning glory of the Lord will enter the temple by the Eastern gate. Seven steps lead up to these gates. Seven is the number of divine perfection and accomplishment. These gates must not be thought of as mere openings in the wall; they are gateways forming separate buildings which project into the outer court to a distance of fifty cubits with a breadth of twenty-five cubits. On both sides of these gateways the prophet saw six little chambers, three on each side, and each six cubits square. There has been much speculation as to the possible use of these little chambers and their meaning. The Hebrew word used here is the same as in 1 Kings xiv:28, translated in this passage "guard-chamber." This may be the purpose of these chambers in the gateway building of this first wall. This seems to be confirmed by chapter xliv:11 and 14, which speaks of the Levites having charge of the gates of the house, so that in all probability these guard-chambers will be in charge of the Levites. Let us also notice the prominence of the numbers three and twelve. There are 2x3 guard-chambers in each gateway both in the outer court and also in the inner court. This gives us thirty-six guard-chambers, or 3x12. The number three means symbolically fullness, a divine fullness, and twelve stands for divine sovereignty and government. Three times twelve means, therefore, divine fullness in sovereign power and government. God Himself will be the guardian and protector of this millennial sanctuary of His earthly people.

Mention is made also of a porch in connection with each gateway. This porch of the gate is inward, and it must be thought of in the form of a hall. Such a porch-hall is mentioned in the architecture of Solomon's temple (1 Kings vi:3; 2 Chron. iii:4; see also Joel ii:17). These vestibule halls are the termination of the gateway leading into the outer court itself. The porch-hall of the significant Eastern gate is reserved for the Prince. He enters by way of the porch of that gate and goes out the same way (chapter xliv:3). And there is a door for each gate, for we read that the East gate was to be shut (xliv:1-2). The door at the termination of the gateway is mentioned in verse 11. The width of the doorway is ten cubits and the height of the door itself thirteen cubits—10x3. The number ten signifies responsibility, and three, as already stated, is symbolical of divine fullness. Then posts were seen by the prophet. Each gateway had two posts and each post is two cubits thick and sixty cubits high (verses 9, 14). Critics have declared that the given dimension of sixty cubits is impossible. We do not know why this should be declared impossible. Some critics have said that the man could not have measured these sixty cubits; but the word measure is not used at all. The windows of the little chambers will be closed windows. Upon the posts were palm trees. These palm trees were ornamental and artificial (xl:18). That palms are prominent in this millennial temple, crowning first of all the high posts, which towered above all, so that the palms were seen, is not without significance. Palms are the symbols of victory. Branches of palm trees were also used during the celebration of the feast of tabernacles, which dispensationally foreshadows the millennial age of blessing and glory. And that is why palms are lifted high above everything on the gateway pillars of the wall surrounding the outer court. The time of blessing, victory, peace and glory has come.

III. The Outer Court.

Then brought he me into the outward court and, lo, there were chambers, and a pavement made for the court round about: thirty chambers were upon the pavement. And the pavement by the side of the gates over against the length of the gates was the lower pavement. Then he measured the breadth from the forefront of the lower gate unto the forefront of the inner court without, an hundred cubits eastward and northward. And the gate of the outward court that looked toward the north, he measured the length thereof, and the breadth thereof. And the little chambers thereof were three on this side and three on that side; and the posts thereof and the arches thereof were after the measure of the first gate: the length thereof was fifty cubits, and the breadth five and twenty cubits. And their windows, and their arches, and their palm trees, were after the measure of the gate that looketh toward the east; and they went up unto it by seven steps; and the arches thereof were before them. And the gate of the inner court was over against the gate toward the north, and toward the east; and he measured from gate to gate an hundred cubits. After that he brought me toward the south: and behold a gate toward the south: and he measured the posts thereof and the arches thereof according to these measures. And there were windows in it and in the arches thereof round about, like those windows: the length was fifty cubits, and the breadth five and twenty cubits. And there were seven steps to go up to it, and the arches thereof were before them: and it had palm trees, one on this side, and another on that side, upon the posts thereof. And there was a gate in the inner court toward the south: and he measured from gate to gate toward the south an hundred cubits (verses 17-27).

The man with the measuring line now leads the prophet into the outer court itself. He had passed through the East gate and has now the vision of the outer court. Here again he beholds chambers. The word used for chamber is a different word from the one used in verses 7, 10, 12, 13, 16, 21, 29, 33 and 36. The chambers of the outer court are no longer guard-rooms. The word used here is found in 1 Sam. ix:22, which was not a small chamber by any means, inasmuch as thirty persons could be accommodated. The word

is used later for the chambers in which the priests kept the tithes and offerings. Such chambers were in the temple of Solomon. In the millennial temple they probably will serve the same purpose. Then we read of a pavement made for the court round about. It is a pavement of stones (see 2 Kings xvi:17; 2 Chron. vii:3; Esther i:6—the same Hebrew word is used in these passages). This pavement, probably in the form of a mosaic arrangement, covers the entire outer court and of the chambers were thirty upon the pavement. Where are these chambers located? Are they together or scattered over the entire outer court? We believe they will be located alongside of each gateway, two on the side of the East gate, two at the North gate and two at the South gate. This seems to be the correct location, for the prophet in having stepped through the gateway into the outer court sees these chambers first, so that they must have been at the entrance gate. The measurement follows and the North gate and South gate are described. They compare in every way to the East gate, each having its seven steps, its little chambers (guard-chambers) its posts and palm trees.

IV. The Inner Court, the Sacrificial Tables and the Chamber.

And he brought me to the inner court by the south gate: and he measured the south gate according to these measures; And the little chambers thereof, and the posts thereof, and the arches thereof, according to these measures: and there were windows in it and in the arches thereof round about: it was fifty cubits long, and five and twenty cubits broad. And the arches round about were five and twenty cubits long, and five cubits broad. And the arches thereof were toward the outer court; and palm trees were upon the posts thereof: and the going up to it had eight steps. And he brought me into the inner court toward the east: and he measured the gate according to these measures. And the little chambers thereof, and the posts thereof, and the arches thereof, were according to

these measures: and there were windows therein and in the arches thereof round about: it was fifty cubits long, and five and twenty cubits broad. And the arches thereof were toward the outward court; and palm trees were upon the posts thereof, on this side, and on that side: and the going up to it had eight steps. And he brought me to the north gate, and measured it according to these measures; The little chambers thereof, the posts thereof, and the arches thereof, and the windows to it round about: the length was fifty cubits, and the breadth five and twenty cubits. And the posts thereof were toward the outer court; and palm trees were upon the posts thereof, on this side, and on that side: and the going up to it had eight steps. And the chambers and the entries thereof were by the posts of the gates, where there they washed the burnt offering. And in the porch of the gate were two tables on this side, and two tables on that side, to slay thereon the burnt offering and the sin offering and the trespass offering. And at the side without, as one goeth up to the entry of the north gate, were two tables; and on the other side, which was at the porch of the gate, were two tables. Four tables were on this side, and four tables on that side, by the side of the gate; eight tables, whereupon they slew their sacrifices. And the four tables were of hewn stone for the burnt offering, of a cubit and an half long, and a cubit and a half broad, and one cubit high: whereupon also they laid the instruments wherewith they slew the burnt offering and the sacrifice. And within were hooks, an hand broad, fastened round about: and upon the tables was the flesh of the offering. And without the inner gate were the chambers of the singers in the inner court, which was at the side of the north gate; and their prospect was toward the south: one at the side of the east gate having the prospect toward the north. And he said unto me, This chamber, whose prospect is toward the south, is for the priests, the keepers of the charge of the house. And the chamber, whose prospect is toward the north, is for the priests, the keepers of the charge of the altar: these are the sons of Zadok among the sons of Levi, which come near to the Lord to minister unto him. So he measured the court, an hundred cubits long, and an hundred cubits broad, foursquare; and the altar that was before the house (verses 28-47).

We follow the prophet now into the inner court. This court is smaller, exactly one hundred cubits square (verse 47). In the center of this four square court stands the great altar, eighteen cubits square and twelve cubits high (chap. xliii:13-17). West of this great altar is a higher terrace upon which the temple itself stands. The approach to this inner court is also through three gates corresponding to the three gates in the wall surrounding the outer court. We must notice, however, that there are eight steps in connection with the gateways leading into this inner court, while the gateways leading into the outer court had only seven steps. The number eight is symbolical of the new covenant and the new creation.* This great place of worship, by these eight steps, which lead to the interior, has the mark of the new age, the age when all things are made new. These gateways have also the little chambers like in the gateways of the outer court. The prophet in his vision entered by the South gate; then he came next to the East gate (verse 32), and finally to the North gate (verse 35); and these three gateways had their arches, posts and palm trees upon the posts. All is symmetrical. These three gateways are seen in line with the gateways of the outer court, but the porches were not towards the inside, but at the other end next to the outer court. In measurement and everything else they correspond to the gateways leading into the outer court.

The description of the great altar which stands in the

*Seven days the priests had to take in their consecration; on the *eighth* day they entered upon their work. Circumcision was practised on the *eighth* day, symbolical of the death of Christ and the putting off of the body of the flesh (Col. ii:1), the entrance into the new creation. On the *eighth* day Christ was transfigured and the transfiguration is a type of His coming into the kingdom. The *eighth* psalm shows Him the head of the new creation, with all things under His feet.

middle of the inner court is given later; we shall follow it when we come to the text. The sacrifices are to be brought in this inner court and therefore we find next the sacrificial tables mentioned on which the burnt offering, the sin offering and the trespass offering will be slain. Two tables were in the porch of the gate on this side and two on the other side. Then at the steps of the gate on both sides were two tables, four tables on the one side and four on the other. In all there are eight tables whereupon to slay sacrifices. Besides these, there are four smaller tables of hewn stone, especially for the burnt offering, whereupon they also lay the instruments used in slaying the sacrifices. This gives 3x4 tables—twelve which are grouped on both sides of the steps, along the sides of the gateway and in the porch. On these tables the sacrifices are slain, washed and otherwise prepared and the smaller tables are for the instruments. Are these twelve tables only at one gate or at all the gates? There is reason to believe that each of the gateways leading to the inner courts is furnished with these sacrificial tables. If this is correct we have again the significant numbers and combination 3x12, corresponding to the guard-chambers at the three gateways, which also are 3x12.

Besides the chambers and the entries to the gates where they washed the sacrifices (verse 38) there are without the inner gate chambers at each gate for the singers and the priests (verses 44-46) who are the keepers of the house. These chambers were evidently detached from the gateways and yet near by. No measurement of these chambers is given. The inner court itself was a hundred cubits square; in the outer was the great altar.

V. The Vestibule of the Temple.

And he brought me to the porch of the house, and measured each post of the porch, five cubits on this side, and five cubits on that side: and the breadth of the gate was three cubits on this side, and three cubits on that side. The length of the porch was twenty cubits, and the breadth eleven cubits; and he brought me by the steps whereby they went up to it: and there were pillars by the posts, one on this side, and another on that side (verses 48-49).

These closing verses of this chapter introduce us to the temple building. The prophet is brought in vision to the porch of the house. The vestibule in which the prophet finds himself is twenty cubits long and eleven cubits broad.* The number ten is here seen again two by ten. The number of the steps leading up to the vestibule of the temple are not given. Besides the posts of the vestibule there are two pillars also, one on each side of the entrance gate, which remind us of the two pillars "Jachin and Boaz" in Solomon's temple (1 Kings vii:21, 45). Many of these details are obscure, their deeper and symbolical meaning hidden. It would be an easy matter to make all kinds of spiritual applications. As to such applications one has well said, "We need a vigilant watch lest we pervert the holy Word of God; and I trust myself to be reticent rather than thus offend." The construction, the measurements and arrangement tell out divine perfection. When at last this great millennial temple is erected in Israel's land, it will be a glorious witness for the Lord and as the central place of earthly worship worthy of that coming age of peace and glory.

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*The Septuagint gives ten cubits instead of only eleven, which probably is correct.

THE HOLY AND MOST HOLY. THE SIDE BUILDING AND THE INTERIOR.

Chapter xli.

The man with the measuring reed had gradually introduced in the vision Ezekiel to the outer wall and outer and inner court of this great future temple. The chambers, posts, gateways, sacrificial tables, etc., were all described in detail and so the prophet was brought into the temple vestibule (xl:48-49) to be led on into the temple itself. He beholds now the Holy place, the Most Holy, the side buildings, the hinder buildings and the interior of the temple.

I. The Holy Place and the Most Holy.

Afterward he brought me to the temple, and measured the posts, six cubits broad on the one side, and six cubits broad on the other side, which was the breadth of the tabernacle. And the breadth of the door was ten cubits; and the sides of the door were five cubits on the one side, and five cubits on the other side: and he measured the length thereof, forty cubits: and the breadth, twenty cubits. Then went he inward, and measured each post of the door, two cubits; and the door, six cubits; and the breadth of the door, seven cubits. So he measured the length thereof, twenty cubits; and the breadth, twenty cubits, before the temple: and he said unto me, This is the most holy place (verses 1-4).

The first two verses give the measurement of the Holy part. Of the contents of this part, how it was furnished, nothing is said; only the measurement is mentioned. The place is forty cubits long and twenty cubits broad. In this respect it corresponds to the temple of Solomon in which the Holy place had the same dimensions, while the same part in the wilderness tabernacle was only twenty cubits by ten cubits. We find therefore that the Holy part in the temple of Solomon and Ezekiel's temple is double the size of the Holy part of the tabernacle. There is a door which leads from the vestibule into this Holy place and at both sides are door

posts, six cubits broad on the one side and six on the other; between these two posts is the door, the breadth of which is ten cubits.* The number twelve is again in evidence in these two posts, twice six. Inasmuch as the wall (verse 5) is six cubits thick these two posts are probably a part of the wall surrounding the temple. Later we receive the additional information that the waters issued from under the threshold of the house eastward, the seer being at this door (xlvii:1).

Then the man went inward, into the Most Holy. This was a perfect square twenty cubits long and twenty broad. Let us notice that the prophet here does not enter the place, for it is the Most Holy, the dwelling place of Jehovah.

The man entered in alone, while the prophet remained outside. There was a door six cubits high and seven cubits broad. The breadth of the door leading into the Holy part was ten cubits, but the door leading into the Most Holy was seven cubits broad, the number which denotes divine perfection. The description of the interior of the temple is given in verses 15-26.

II. The Side Buildings.

After he measured the wall of the house, six cubits; and the breadth of every side chamber, four cubits, round about the house on every side. And the side chambers were three, one over another, and thirty in order; and they entered into the wall which was of the house for the side chambers round about, that they might have hold, but they had not hold in the wall of the house. And there was an enlarging, and a winding about still upward to the side chambers: for the winding about of the house went still upward round about the house: therefore the breadth of the house was still upward, and so increased from the lowest chamber to the highest by the midst. I saw also the height of the house round about: the foundations of the side chambers were a full reed of six great cubits. The thickness of the wall, which was for the side chamber without, was five

*The words "which was the breadth of the tabernacle" are by some declared doubtful. The Septuagint has omitted them.

cubits: and that which was left was the place of the side chambers that were within. And between the chambers was the wideness of twenty cubits round about the house on every side. And the doors of the side chambers were toward the place that was left, one door toward the north, and another door toward the south: and the breadth of the place that was left was five cubits round about (verses 5-11).

He measured first the wall which surrounded the Holy and the Most Holy part. This wall was six cubits. Then there are side chambers. Such side chambers were also in the temple of Solomon (1 Kings vi:5). There are three stories and each contains thirty chambers, so there are ninety chambers in all. These three stories with the ninety chambers surrounded the temple on its three sides, the North, West and South sides, the East side being the vestibule and entrance into the temple; no side chambers are found above this entrance. These side chambers enter into the wall, that they might have hold and still they have not hold of the wall itself. In this also the temple corresponds to the arrangement of Solomon's temple. 1 Kings vi:6 explains the construction of these chambers: "On the outside he made rebatements in the wall of the house round about, that the beams should not have hold in the wall of the house." The side chambers in the Solomonic temple were fastened on the house with timber of cedar (1 Kings vi:10). This probably explains the meaning of the attachment of these three stories of chambers in Ezekiel's temple. The side chambers must therefore be considered as an addition to the wall itself which surrounds the Holy and Most Holy. We do not know what will be the use of these ninety chambers in the millennial temple. The seventh verse shows that the stories of this addition to the wall, containing the chambers, have galleries round about. And the gallery of the second story is broader than the gallery of the first, and the gallery of the third is broader than the second story, so that this annex broadens

upward. The expression "winding about" has led some of the few expositors of these chapters to identify with the winding stairs of the Solomonic temple (1 Kings vi:8); but this is incorrect. The text does not mention a staircase at all. A better rendering of verse 8 is: "And I saw that the house had an elevation round about, the foundations of the side chambers, a full reed, six cubits to the joint."* There was then a raised basement on the three sides of the temple and the six cubits correspond to the ten steps (xl:49) marking the height of the elevation. Verse 9 shows that the thickness of the wall, which was for the side chambers without was five cubits, besides this there was a free place along the building. "And between the chambers (and the house) was a width of twenty cubits round about the house on every side." This afforded the proper light for these chambers. "And the entry of the side chambers was toward what was left free, one entry toward the North, and one entry toward the South; and the width of the space left free was five cubits round about." The side chambers were therefore entered from the outside.

III. The Hinder Building—The Total Measurement.

Now the building that was before the separate place at the end toward the west was seventy cubits broad; and the wall of the building was five cubits thick round about, and the length thereof ninety cubits. So he measured the house, an hundred cubits long; and the separate place, and the building, with the walls thereof, an hundred cubits long; also the breadth of the face of the house, and of the separate place toward the east, an hundred cubits. And he measured the length of the building over against the separate place which was behind it, and the galleries thereof on the one side and on the other side, an hundred cubits, with the inner temple, and the porches of the court (verses 12-15).

Here a new building comes into view which is behind the

*i.e., To the level place where the side chambers begin.

temple building toward the West. Its dimensions are seventy cubits broad, ninety cubits long and the wall is five cubits in thickness round about. The use of this building is not stated. Its use is probably for the disposal of the refuse from the sacrifices and other unclean things. No other description is given of this hinder building, this separate place. Verses 12 and 14 give the total measurement of the house, a hundred cubits, which is the total of the previously given measures.

IV. The Interior of the Temple Described.

The thresholds, and the closed windows, and the galleries round about on their three stories, over against the door, ceiled with wood round about, and from the ground up to the windows, and the windows were covered; to that above the entry, even unto the inner house, and without, and by all the wall round about within and without, all was by measure. And it was made with cherubim and palm trees, so that a palm tree was between a cherub and a cherub; and every cherub had two faces; so that the face of a man was toward the palm tree on the one side, and the face of a young lion toward the palm tree on the other side: it was made through all the house round about. From the ground unto above the door were cherubim and palm trees made, and on the wall of the temple. The posts of the temple were squared, and the front of the sanctuary had the same appearance. The altar was of wood three cubits high, and the length thereof two cubits; and the corners thereof, and the length thereof, and the walls thereof, were of wood; and he said unto me, This is the table that is before the Lord. And the temple and the sanctuary had two doors. And the doors had two leaves, two turning leaves; two leaves for the one door, and two leaves for the other door. And there were made on them, on the doors of the temple, cherubim and palm trees, like as were made upon the walls; and there was a wooden portal in front of the porch without. And closed windows and palm trees on the one side and on the other side, on the sides of the porch, and upon the side chambers of the house, and the portals* (verses 16-26).

*Corrected text.

From verse 16 we learn that all was wainscoted with wood. The altar was also of wood. It is significant that silver and gold, so prominent in the tabernacle in the wilderness and in Solomon's temple, are entirely absent in the millennial temple. The words "silver and gold" are not mentioned once in Ezekiel xl-xlviii. Silver typifies grace in redemption, being the ransom money. Gold typifies divine righteousness. Both are absent in the millennial temple for what the silver and gold foreshadows is now realized in His redeemed earthly people. The heavenly Jerusalem has gold in it, but silver is not mentioned in the description of the city in Revelation xxi.

The chief ornaments in this temple are cherubim and palm trees; they were along the wall of the temple. So it was in the temple of Solomon. "And he carved all the walls of the house round about with carved figures of cherubim and palm trees and open flowers within and without" (1 Kings vi:29).

A palm tree was between cherub and cherub. As stated in the previous chapter palms are the emblems of victory and remind us of the feast of tabernacles. They were seen high above on the posts. Cherubim speak of the presence of the Lord, who enters this house and is worshipped here. But the cherubim here have only two faces and not four as in the opening vision of this book (chapter i:10-12). As often stated, these celestial beings tell out the Lord Jesus Christ in His personal glory. The lion, His kingly glory; the face of a man, His true humanity; the face of an ox, His servant character; and the face of an eagle, His heavenly origin and destiny, Son of God. It is not without meaning that the face of a man and the face of a young lion are seen on these cherubim and each face looks upon a palm tree. Its symbolical meaning is obvious. The Lord Jesus Christ has come again and visited the earth and the temple and appeared as the glorified Man and the Lion of the tribe of Judah. His is the victory and the glory. When at last this temple stands in Israel's land, and

its meaning and measurements, as well as other details, are fully known and understood, it will be known then that His blessed work, victory and person are symbolically seen throughout this house.

The altar was of wood, three cubits high and two cubits long. "And he said unto me, This is the table which is before Jehovah." The altar is the altar of incense. The burnt offering altar is described in chapter xliii:13, etc. In the tabernacle and Solomon's temple the altar of incense was overlaid with gold. Note also the difference in the measurement. The altar of incense in the tabernacle was two cubits high and one cubit long and broad; the altar in the future temple is three cubits high and two cubits long, nearly double in size. The incense offered upon the altar is the symbol of the fragrance Christ is to God. It also typifies praise and prayer (Ps. cxli:2; Rev. v:8; viii:3); being communion with God it is here called "the table which is before Jehovah." How great will be the fragrance of Christ, and the praise and worship God will receive, in this great house of worship!

There were also two doors for the sanctuary with two turning leaves. They were ornamented, like the walls, with cherubim and palm trees.

THE CELLS FOR THE PRIESTS.

Chapter xlii.

This chapter gives the description of the chambers or cells of the priests and closes with the final measurements of this temple. After this, as recorded in the next chapter, the prophet beheld the return of the glory of the Lord and how He entered the house.

I. The Description of the Cells for the Priests.

Then he brought me forth into the outer court, the way toward the north: and he brought me into the cells that was over against

the separate place, and which was before the building toward the north. Before the length of an hundred cubits was the north door, and the breadth was fifty cubits. Over against the twenty cubits which pertained to the inner court, and over against the pavement which pertained to the outer court, was gallery against gallery in three stories. And before the cells was a walk of ten cubits breadth inward, a way of one cubit; and their doors toward the north. Now the upper cells were shorter: for the galleries were higher than these, than the lower, and than the middlemost of the building. For they were in three stories, but had not pillars as the pillars of the courts: therefore the building was straitened more than the lowest and the middlemost from the ground. And the wall that was without over against the cells, toward the outer court on the forepart of the cells, the length thereof was fifty cubits: For the length of the cells that were in the outer court was fifty cubits: and, lo, before the temple were an hundred cubits. And from under these cells was the entry on the east side, as one goeth into them from the outer court. The cells were in the thickness of the wall of the court toward the east, over against the separate place, and over against the building. And the way before them was like the appearance of the cells which were toward the north, as long as they, and as broad as they: and all their goings out were both according to their fashions, and according to their doors. And according to the doors of the cells, that were toward the south was a door in the head of the way, even the way directly before the wall toward the east, as one entereth into them (verses 1-12).

Once more the man leads forth the prophet. The Holy part and the Most Holy had been measured and described and now he leaves the innermost part and is led again into the outer court. He goes on towards the North and faces a cell-building over against the separate place. This separate place is the hinder building described in chapter xli:12. There are three such cell-buildings, one on the North and the other on the South; that is, facing the two sides of the hinder building in the separate place. The third cell-building is at the East-gate. The entrance to these cell-buildings is from the outer court. The measurement given presents con-

siderable difficulty which we do not attempt to solve. Each of these buildings has three stories and before each is a walk of ten cubits. We also learn that the upper story of cells is shorter than the first and second stories; this corresponds in architecture to the side buildings described in chapter xli:5-11. How many cells or chambers are in each of these buildings is not stated.

II. For What the Cells are Used.

> Then said he unto me, The north cells and the south chambers, which are before the separate place, they be holy cells, where the priests that approach unto the Lord shall eat the most holy things: there shall they lay the most holy things, and the meat offering, and the sin offering, and the trespass offering; for the place is holy. When the priests enter therein, then shall they not go out of the holy place into the outer court, but there they shall lay their garments wherein they minister; for they are holy; and shall put on other garments, and shall approach to those things which are for the people (verses 13-14).

The cells on the North and South, facing the separate place are especially mentioned as being holy chambers. Here the priests who approach unto the Lord are to eat the most holy things and there they shall lay the most holy things, the meal offering, the sin offering and the trespass offering. They were set apart for this purpose. For this reason at the end of these two cell-buildings towards the west were the places where the offerings were boiled and the meal offering baked. They were the kitchens of the priests. Of this we read in chapter xlvi:19, 20: "Then he brought me through the passage which was at the side of the gate, into the holy cells which were for the priests, which looked toward the North; and behold a place was there at the end westward. And he said unto me, This is the place where the priests shall boil the trespass offering and the sin offering and where they shall bake the meal offering,

that they bring them not out into the outer court, so as to hallow the people." In these chambers they put the garments of their ministry. The priests are not to wear their holy garments outside of the inner court lest they should be profaned. Why these Levitical ordinances are maintained in the millennial temple with a priesthood still ministering, the purpose of all this, we shall take up more fully in the exposition of the chapters which follow.

III. Final Measurement.

> Now when he had made an end of measuring the inner house, he brought me forth toward the gate whose prospect is toward the east, and measured it round about. He measured the east side with the measuring reed, five hundred reeds, with the measuring reed round about. He measured the north side, five hundred reeds, with the measuring reed round about. He measured the south side, five hundred reeds, with the measuring reed round about. He measured the south side, five hundred reeds, with the measuring reed. He turned about to the west side, and measured five hundred reeds with the measuring reed. He measured it by the four sides: it had a wall round about, five hundred reeds long, and five hundred broad, to make a separation between the sanctuary and the profane place (verses 15-20).

The measuring of the inner house completed, the prophet is led back to the starting point, the gate that is toward the East. In this final measurement four times five hundred reeds are mentioned. The east side, north side, south side, and west side, each is measured as being five hundred reeds. This passage has occasioned much controversy. The question is if five hundred cubits or five hundred reeds is correct. If we take the reed to be ten feet it would mean that the temple is five thousand feet on each side. But that seems impossible in view of the previous measurement. The Septuagint translators realized this difficulty and took the liberty of changing the word "reeds" to "cubits." If cubits is right then it would agree with all the previous

measurements, hence many of the commentators have changed the reeds to cubits. But what authority is there to make this change? The Hebrew word for reeds is "*gonim*" and cubit is "*ammah*," two entirely different words. A copyist's error is therefore excluded. We maintain that measurement is five hundred reeds and that the text is correct.

But what is measured? Certainly not the temple area with its wall, outer court and Holy and the Most Holy. What is measured here is the territory which surrounds the whole temple buildings. If we retrace the steps of the man who measured and led along Ezekiel we see him leaving the Most Holy; then they go back into the Holy part, the outer court and then passing through the eastern gate through which they had entered, they are both outside of the outer wall. They are now in a very large space surrounding the temple buildings, and this space is measured. Furthermore we find that there was an immense wall surrounding this enclosure: this wall separated between that which is holy and what is common (verse 20). Another difficulty has been mentioned by expositors if this measurement of five hundred reeds is correct. They say it is far too large for Mount Moriah, the chosen place of the temple. There is no difficulty here at all, for we read, "And it shall come to pass in the last days that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains and shall be exalted above the hills and all nations shall flow unto it" (Isa. ii:2). When the Lord returns and His Kingdom will be established great physical changes take place in Israel's land, changes which no one can fully understand.* The mountain upon which this temple is to be built is a very high mountain, which comes into existence when the earth and the heavens will

*See Zech. xiv:4, 8, 10.

be shaken. The temple was a holy square of five hundred cubits, in another square of five hundred reeds. Later we shall find that there is another holy portion of the land which surrounds the temple, and the territory of five hundred reeds square, and that portion was of an extremely large dimension, that is, twenty-five thousand reeds in length and ten thousand reeds in breadth.* All this would not be possible in the present Palestine; but it will be made possible through the changes of that coming day (Isa. ii:12; xxiv:3-4; 19-23).

THE RETURNING GLORY. THE ALTAR AND THE WORSHIP.

Chapter xliii.

The plan of the entire temple with its buildings, walls and the surrounding territory having been revealed and fully recorded in the preceding chapters, greater things are now shown to the prophet. It concerns the temple and the service which is to be maintained in this magnificent house of worship. In the present chapter we find first a description of the return of the glory of the Lord to the house, filling the house. This is followed by a message delivered by the Lord; speaking out of the house; the message is addressed to the prophet, who is also to speak to the house of Israel concerning their condition and the law of the house. The dimensions of the great altar are given and how that altar is to be consecrated. This is the first great service in this temple.

I. The Return of the Glory of the Lord.

Afterward he brought me to the gate, even the gate that looketh toward the east: And, behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east: and his voice was like a noise of many

*Chapter xlv:1-2.

waters: and the earth shined with his glory. And it was according to the appearance of the vision which I saw, even according to the vision that I saw when I came to destroy the city: and the visions were like the vision that I saw by the river Chebar; and I fell upon my face. And the glory of the Lord came into the house by the way of the gate whose prospect is toward the east. So the spirit took me up, and brought me into the inner court; and, behold, the glory of the Lord filled the house (verses 1-5).

The man leads him back to the eastern gate through which they had entered first when the house was measured. And here he beholds a startling event. Up to this point the house with its buildings had been seen in silent grandeur. No sound was heard; nothing was seen. But as they stand at the gate toward the east, suddenly the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east. Then the voice of Jehovah was heard as the sound of many waters and the earth shined with His glory. The dedication of the house by the return of the Lord with His glory is now to take place. Thus the tabernacle in the wilderness was dedicated (Exodus xl:34-35). "A cloud covered the tent of the congregation and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle." The same happened when Solomon had finished the temple. "The cloud filled the house of the Lord, so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord" (1 Kings viii:10-11; 2 Chron. v:13, 14; vii:1-3). The Lord with His glory entered into these prepared places and in like manner He will enter the great temple Ezekiel beheld in his prophetic vision. Such a return of the glory of the God of Israel to dwell in another temple has not yet taken place. When the returned remnant after the proclamation of Cyrus had rebuilt the temple, no cloud filled the house nor was the glory of the Lord seen. Some apply this vision to the time when our Lord was on earth and that it was fulfilled when He entered the temple. This needs no further refutation,

but it shows how much at sea expositors of the Word of God are who reject the future restoration of Israel. When the Lord was on earth He had laid His visible glory by and was rejected by the nation. This vision of glory will be fulfilled when He returns the second time in power and glory; then and never before will this visible glory be displayed and His glory will shine over Israel's land and finally cover the earth as the waters cover the deep.

We must notice here especially that the vision the prophet beheld was "according to the appearance of the vision" he saw before the destruction of the city "the visions were like the visions" which he saw "by the river Chebar." This points back to the first chapter when first by the river Chebar the heavens were opened to Ezekiel the priest, and he saw visions of God. At the close of that chapter we read after the recorded vision, "This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord." The same vision of glory appeared again to him when Ezekiel had left the river Chebar and gone into the plain (iii:22-23). Then he had witnessed the gradual and solemn departure of the glory of the Lord. "Then the glory of the Lord departed from off the threshold of the house, and stood over the cherubim. And the cherubim lifted up their wings, and mounted up from the earth in my sight . . . They stood at the door of the east gate of the house of the Lord, and the glory of the God of Israel was over them above" (x:18-19). Then finally the Shekinah went up and disappeared. "And the glory of the Lord went up from the midst of the city and stood upon the mountain which is on the east side of the city" (xi:22).

The similarity of the departure of the glory of the Lord from the temple before its destruction by Nebuchadnezzar and its future return to the temple of Ezekiel's vision is most interesting. It is the same glory which departed,

which returns; it is the same Lord who resumes relationship with His earthly people. The withdrawal of the visible glory of the Lord meant the departure of His gracious presence from among His people, which was followed by judgment. The return of the visible glory means the return of His gracious presence among them and that the judgment, which has lasted so long, is forever gone. The departure of the glory was through the east gate and was finally seen upon the mountain at the east side of the city; the return is from the way of the east and the glory of the Lord enters through the east gate. But it is not only a visible glory, but the Lord Himself is in the Shekinah. Ezekiel beheld above the firmament and the cherubim, when he saw the glory of the Lord at the river Chebar, he heard His voice. And here also His voice is mentioned "like the sound of many waters." From verses 6 and 7 we learn that after the glory had entered the house the Lord addressed the prophet out of the house.

The Lord Himself in all His glory is manifested and enters the temple, the place of His rest and glory. The cherubim will be seen in person and from the New Testament we learn that angels will be with Him also. His glory will then cover Israel's land and the earth. "His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of His praise. And His brightness was as the light; He had bright beams out of His side* and there was the hiding of His power." This is how Habakkuk describes the same manifestation of the glory of the Lord and the coming of the Lord of glory (see Isaiah xl:5; lviii:8; lx:1-2; lxvi:18). Isaiah's great vision may be viewed as foreshadowing this manifestation of His glory. He saw the Lord sitting upon a throne and His train filled the temple. The seraphim cried one unto another, and said, Holy, holy,

*Marginal reading.

holy is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory. And as the prophet was cleansed and his iniquity taken away and became the messenger of the Lord (Isa. vi), so the nation Israel will be cleansed and forgiven and become the messenger of Jehovah.*

When the Spirit had transported the prophet into the inner court of the temple, he discovered that the glory of the Lord filled the house. We repeat it, no such thing happened when the returned Jewish remnant had entered the temple. When the old men, who had seen the Solomonic temple and knew of its glory, beheld the foundation of the second temple they wept (Ezra iii:12). When the house was dedicated no glory returned, no cloud was seen, no shekinah filled the house. Nor is it a spiritual glory, the glory of the church, as so many seem to believe.

But Haggai, who with Zechariah prophesied during the rebuilding of the temple, uttered a significant prophecy while that second house was building—prophecy which must be linked with Ezekiel's vision of the returning glory: "For thus saith the Lord of Hosts: yet once it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land. And I will shake all nations, and the Desire of all nations shall come, and I will fill this house with glory" (Haggai ii:6-7). This was not the house they were building. It is a future house, a future temple. That house will be built when the heavens and the earth are being shaken, when all nations shake and when the Desire of all nations, the King of glory, the Prince of Peace, our Lord comes, Then this house will be filled with glory.

It will be a visible glory. It will be a permanent glory. He will now dwell gloriously in the midst of the children of

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*Such an application seems warranted in view of the message Ezekiel received from the Lord to the people (verses 6-12).

Israel (verse 7). This visible glory will be seen over Jerusalem, like as it was of old, a cloud by day and a shining, flaming fire by night. "And Jehovah will create over every dwelling place of Mount Zion, and over its convocations a cloud by day and a smoke and the brightness of a flame of fire by night, for over all the glory shall be a covering" (Isa. iv:5).

II. The Voice from the Temple and the Message to Israel.

> And I heard one speaking unto me out of the house; and a man stood by me. And he said unto me, Son of man, this is the place of my throne, and the place of the soles of my feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel for ever, and my holy name, shall the house of Israel no more defile, they, nor their kings, with their fornication, and with the carcases of their kings in their high places. In that they set their threshold by my threshold, and their post by my post, and there was only a wall between me and them, they have even defiled my holy name by their abominations that they have committed: and I consumed them in mine anger. Now let them put away their fornication and the carcases of their kings, far from me, and I will dwell in the midst of them for ever. Thou son of man, shew the house to the house of Israel, that they may be ashamed of their iniquities: and let them measure the pattern. And if they be ashamed of all that they have done, shew them the form of the house, and the fashion thereof, and its goings out, and its comings in, and all its forms, and all the ordinances, and all the forms thereof, and all the laws thereof: and write it in their sight, that they may keep the whole form thereof, and all the ordinances thereof, and do them. This is the law of the house; Upon the top of the mountain the whole limit thereof round about shall be most holy. Behold, this is the law of the house (verses 6-12).

The Glory of the Lord and the Lord of Glory had entered the house, filling it; and now the voice of one is heard out of the house. The speaker is the Lord Himself, who had made His dwelling place in the temple (see also xlvi:20, 24; xlvii:6, 8). The man who stood by Ezekiel did not speak, as some expositors claim. He is only guide to the prophet (xliv:1, 4; xlvi:19, 21). He is probably not the same person,

who as the measuring man had accompanied the prophet, for the Hebrew is not "the man" "stood by me," but "a man." This person, no doubt an angel, is silent, waiting till the Lord has spoken and then leads the prophet from place to place.

The first word which the Lord addressed to Ezekiel from the house is significant: "Son of Man, this is the place of my throne, and the place of the soles of my feet where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel forever." Of old the Lord dwelt in the midst of the children of Israel. Thus we read in the book of Exodus, the book of redemption: "I will dwell among the children of Israel, and I will be their God, and they shall know that I am Jehovah their God that brought them forth out of the land of Egypt that I may dwell among them" (Ex. xxix:45, 46). And now after the long and sad history of Israel's apostasy, blindness, judgment and dispersion is ended, He comes to make His dwelling place in their midst again and establishes in Jerusalem His throne. Here He will dwell and bless His people. Of this Psalm cxxxii speaks, "This is my rest forever, here will I dwell, for I have desired it." And other prophets announced that the Lord would dwell in Zion in the midst of His people and establish His throne there (Joel iii:17, 21; Zech. ii:10, 11; viii:3, 8). His rest then will be glorious (Isa. xi:10). When that time comes and the Lord of Glory has come back to earth again, all the promised blessings for Israel, the nations and for all creation will be realized.

Then His holy name will no longer be defiled and the nation will be ashamed of all their past history of rebellion and abomination.* The prophet is therefore commanded

*"The carcases of their kings" may either mean that some of their idolatrous kings had been buried within the bounds of the Solomonic temple, or, the word kings may refer to their idols, which had dominion over them (Isa. xxvi:13). The latter may be the right meaning for the high place mentioned.

to set before the people the house in its measured pattern, so that they might know what a gracious Lord has prepared for them, what He will yet do for His people. It is to lead them to repentance, to acknowledgement of their guilt and shame over their iniquities. Such will be the case in the day of their restoration when these things will be accomplished.

When this house on the top of the mountain is established all will be most holy. His people will be righteous and holy and all Jerusalem with this sanctuary will be holy unto the Lord (Zech. xiv:20-21). This is "the Most Holy" of Daniel's prophecy (Dan. ix) to be anointed when the last prophetic week of seven years has expired.

III. The Measurement and the Ordinances of the Altar.

And these are the measures of the altar in cubits: The cubit is a cubit and an hand breadth: The bottom was a cubit, and the breadth a cubit, and its border thereof on the edge thereof round about shall be a span: and this was the base of the altar. And from the bottom upon the ground to the lower settle was two cubits, and the breadth a cubit; and from the small settle to the great settle four cubits, and the breadth a cubit. So the altar was four cubits; and from the hearth of God and upward were four horns. And the hearth of God was twelve cubits long, twelve broad, square in the four sides thereof. And the settle was fourteen cubits long and fourteen broad in the four sides thereof; and the border about it half a cubit; and the bottom thereof a cubit about; and its steps shall look toward the east. And he said unto me, Son of man, thus saith the Lord Jehovah: These are the ordinances of the altar in the day when they shall make it, to offer burnt offerings thereon, and to sprinkle blood thereon. And thou shalt give to the priests the Levites that be of the seed of Zadok, which approach unto me, to minister unto me, saith the Lord Jehovah, a young bullock for a sin offering. And thou shalt take of its blood, and put it on the four horns of it, and on the four corners of the settle, and upon the border round about: thus shalt thou cleanse and purge it. Thou shalt take the bullock of the sin offering, and it shall be burned in the appointed place of the house, without the sanctuary. And on

the second day thou shalt offer a kid of the goats without blemish for a sin offering; and they shall purge the altar, as they did purge it with the bullock. When thou hast made an end of purging it, thou shalt offer a young bullock without blemish, and a ram out of the flock without blemish. And thou shalt offer them before Jehovah, and the priests shall cast salt upon them, and they shall offer them up for a burnt offering unto Jehovah. Seven days shalt thou prepare every day a goat for a sin offering: they shall also prepare a young bullock, and a ram out of the flock, without blemish. Seven days shall they purge the altar and purify it; and they shall consecrate it. And when these days are expired, it shall be, that upon the eighth day and so forward, the priests shall make your burnt offerings upon the altar, and your peace offerings; and I will accept you, saith the Lord Jehovah (verses 13-27).

The altar which is now described in its measurement, was previously mentioned in chapter xl:47. The altar according to this description, is composed of four square layers (probably stones) one above another, decreasing in extent and increasing in thickness; the top is a square of twelve cubits. This is called "the altar hearth" or "the hearth of God." The three words translated in the authorized version by altar are not the same in the original. In verse 13 the word is "mizbeach." This word is used many times in the Hebrew Bible; it means "slaughter-place." In verse 15 two words are used which are nowhere else found in connection with an altar. The one is "*Harel*," which means "the mountain of God"; and the other "*Ariel*", the meaning of this is different from Ariel in Isa. xxix:i* when it is used for Jerusalem as "the lion of God." Gesenius translated it "the hearth," and still better is "the hearth of God." Upward from this hearth were four horns. The Septuagint gives the height of these horns as one cubit each. While in Exodus xx:25 steps are prohibited for the

*The word "Ariel" as used in Ezekiel has one more letter than the word in Isaiah xxix.

altar, this altar has steps which look toward the east. This great burnt offering altar, standing in the center of the inner court before the house, will be the central place of worship in this future temple.

The ordinances of this burnt offering altar in that future day are given to the prophet, the Lord Jehovah addressing Ezekiel as "Son of Man." Burnt offerings will be brought upon it and blood sprinkled. The priests, the Levites of the seed of Zadok* will minister unto the Lord Jehovah. What is first described is a kind of consecration or dedication of this burnt offering altar, after which the general sacrifices begin (verse 27). First a young bullock is brought for a sin offering and the blood is applied to the altar and the four horns. For seven days these offerings for purging and cleansing continue and with the eighth day the burnt offerings and peace offerings are to be made by the people.

But what do these ordinances mean? Here are priests again standing before an altar, bringing bloody sacrifices, burnt offerings, sin offerings and peace offerings. Is this to be taken literally also? Some expositors have stated that all this had a meaning in the past and could only be true in connection with the second temple. Others attempt to read into it a spiritual meaning. All, or nearly all commentators think it inconceivable that such sacrifices could ever be brought again in a future temple. Those expositors who combat the premillennial coming of the Lord and the literal restoration of Israel, consider the supposed impossibility of a satisfactory explanation of this part of Ezekiel's visions, the collapse of the premillennial argument.

Sacrifices of bulls and goats were brought by Israel in their past history; the Lord commanded His people to do this.

*Zadok means "just." He was the successor of Abiathar in the priesthood—the son of Ahitub of the family of Eleazar (2 Sam. viii:17; 1 Kings ii:27, 35).

Every Christian knows that these sacrifices foreshadowed the work of Christ, His great sacrifice on the Cross. In themselves these sacrifices Israel brought could not take away sins, nor give rest to the conscience, nor could they make the worshipper perfect. The Epistle to the Hebrews demonstrates this fully.

All these sacrifices had a prospective character, looking forward to the work of the Cross. And when the Lamb of God died, when His blessed lips uttered the never-to-be-forgotten words, "It is finished," and God's hand rent the veil from top to bottom, the prospective character of these sacrifices were forever ended. The new and living way into God's presence, into the Holiest, had been made by His blood. During this age Israel has no temple and all their Levitical ordinances can no longer be practised by them. As Hosea declared they are without a sacrifice (Hos. iii:4).

God, during this age, our present age, which began with the rejection of Christ by Israel and ends with His Return, is gathering a heavenly people, the church. The church has for its worship no earthly place, no temple, but worships in spirit and in truth, in a heavenly sanctuary. There are no sacrifices, priests, altars, in connection with the true church, the body of Christ. Christ is all. He is the sacrifice, the priest, and the altar. That the enemy has produced upon Christian ground a ritualism which is aped after the Jewish system and which denies as such the Gospel and Christianity, is well known. They have invented altars, and sacrifices and priests. This is the Judaizing of the church, "the other Gospel which is not another," upon which the Spirit of God has pronounced the curse of God (Gal. i). The day is coming when the Lord will deal in judgment with the apostate church which denies His Son and His work, while His true church will be taken to the place which He has prepared.

When the true church is no longer on earth and the apostate church is left behind to plunge into the great apostasy, then the Jews will partially be restored in unbelief. When they get back to the land they will put up another temple in which they bring again bloody sacrifices. These will be an abomination in the sight of God. Let us hear what Isaiah reveals about this time: "Thus saith the Lord, the heaven is my throne and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye will build unto me? and where is the place of my rest? For all those things hath mine hand made and all those things have been, saith the Lord. But to this man will I look, that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word. He that killeth an ox is as if he slew a man; he that sacrificeth a lamb, as if he cut off a dog's neck; he that offereth an oblation, as if he offered swine's blood; he that burneth incense, as if he blessed an idol. Yea, they have chosen their own ways, and their soul delighteth in their abomination" (Isaiah lxvi:1-3). The entire last chapter of Isaiah shows that the future is in view. The Jews have returned to their land and have resumed their ancient worship. In their midst is also a believing remnant (verse 5) who suffer and are cast out. The Lord looking down from heaven and beholding the sacrifices they bring despises them, for they are an abomination in His sight, because they reject Christ and His sacrifice. This temple worship will be made possible by the coming prince, the little horn of Daniel vii, who will make a covenant with the unbelieving portion of the nation. In the middle of the last seven years (Dan. ix:26) he will break that covenant. Then appears the beast out of the earth (Rev. xiii:11), the false Messiah, and takes his place in that temple, demanding divine worship, claiming to be God (2 Thess. ii).

At the end of the three and one-half years which consti-

tute the great tribulation, the Lord is suddenly manifested. Of this Isaiah speaks also. The unbelieving Jews sneer at the believing remnant: "Let the Lord be glorified!" The Spirit of God gives them the assurance, "but He shall appear to your joy and they shall be ashamed." "A voice of noise from the city, a voice from the temple, a voice of the Lord that rendereth recompense to His enemies" (verse 6). These words describe His manifestation. After this comes the restoration of Israel. The apostates who worshipped the Beast will be punished. The temple Ezekiel describes will then be built and Israel is now at last the kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Exod. xix:6). The new covenant promised to them will then be ratified (Jere. xxxi:31-34).

Their great temple will be more than their place of worship; it will be a house of prayer for all nations. Let us listen again to Isaiah's great testimony. "The sons of the stranger, that join themselves to the Lord, to serve Him, and to love the name of the Lord, to be His servants, every one that keepeth the Sabbath* from polluting it, and taketh hold of my covenant; even them (Gentiles) will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people. The Lord God who gathereth the outcasts of Israel saith, Yet will I gather others to him, beside those that are gathered unto Him" (Isa. lvi:6-8). All this has nothing to do with the church or the present dispensation of grace. It is a prophecy of the kingdom, the age to come, the dispensation of the fullness of times.

*The sects, like Seventh Day Baptists, Adventists, etc., quote this passage. They are utterly wrong for this has nothing whatever to do with the present age.

So let us understand that the millennial temple will be the great center of earthly worship during the reign of the King of Kings. In that temple sacrifices will be brought again. The ancient worship of Israel will be resumed and that in a way as Israel never enjoyed it in the past. To deny the literalness of these sacrifices does violence to the Word of God. Ezekiel is not the only prophet who tells us of this. One of the strongest passages is found in Jeremiah. Speaking of the coming reign of Christ, Jeremiah tells us, "In those days shall Judah be saved and Jerusalem shall dwell safely, and this is the name wherewith she shall be called, The Lord our Righteousness. For thus saith the Lord, David shall never want a man to sit upon the throne of the house of Israel. Neither shall the priests, the Levites want a man before Me to offer burnt offerings, and to kindle meal offerings, and to do sacrifice continually" (Jere. xxxiii:15-18). Why then should it be an impossible thing that literal sacrifices are brought again?

But what is the meaning and the purpose of these animal sacrifices? The answer is quite simple. While the sacrifices Israel brought once had a prospective meaning, the sacrifices brought in the millennial temple have a retrospective meaning. When during this age God's people worship in the appointed way at His table, with the bread and wine as the memorial of His love, it is a restrospect. We look back to the Cross. We show forth His death. It is "till He comes." Then this memorial feast ends forever. Never again will the Lord's Supper be kept after the Saints of God have left the earth to be with the Lord in glory. The resumed sacrifices will be the memorial of the Cross and the whole wonderful story of the redemption for Israel and the nations of the earth, during the kingdom reign of Christ. And what a memorial it will be! What a meaning these sacrifices will have! They will bring to a

living remembrance everything of the past. The retrospect will produce the greatest scene of worship, of praise and adoration this earth has ever seen. All the Cross meant and the Cross has accomplished will be recalled and a mighty "Hallelujah Chorus" will fill the earth and the heavens. The sacrifices will constantly remind the peoples of the earth of Him who died for Israel, who paid the redemption price for all creation and whose glory now covers the earth as the waters cover the deep. And above in the New Jerusalem, where the throne of the Lamb is, the Saints in glory sing their Hallelujah (Psa. cxlix:5).

I. The Outer Eastern Gate and the Prince.

Chapter xliv.

Then he brought me back the way of the gate of the outward sanctuary which looketh toward the east; and it was shut. Then said the Lord unto me; This gate shall be shut, it shall not be opened, and no man shall enter in by it; because the Lord, the God of Israel, hath entered in by it, therefore it shall be shut. It is for the prince; the prince, he shall sit in it to eat bread before the Lord; he shall enter by the way of the porch of that gate, and shall go out by the way of the same (verses 1-3).

In the previous chapter the prophet was in the inner court (xliii:5). It was there he heard the voice of the Lord and received the message and saw the great altar and its ordinances. From the inner court he is led back by the man to the eastern gate. This gate he finds no longer open. As they arrived it was shut. The last time that gate was seen it was open, and the glory of the Lord entered through this eastern gateway. The reason why this gate is to be shut is stated by the Lord in His address to Ezekiel. "Then said the Lord unto me; This gate shall be shut, it shall not be opened, and no man shall enter in by it; because the Lord, the God of Israel, hath entered in by it, therefore shall it be shut." The Lord who entered with His glory is the Son

of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, and here His full glory is made known. He is the Lord, the God of Israel, He "whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting" (Micah v:2). The gate is now to serve another purpose. "It is for the prince; the prince, he shall sit in it to eat bread before the Lord; he shall enter by the way of the porch of that gate, and shall go out by the way of the same." Who is this prince? Some say that this prince is the Lord Himself. Our Lord is repeatedly called a prince (Isaiah ix:6, 7; lv:4*; Dan. ix:25; Rev. i:5). In chapters xxxiv and xxxvii Messiah, Christ, is meant by the One Shepherd "My servant David," who will be King and Prince over them. But now in the closing chapters of this book a prince is mentioned seventeen times. But not once is he spoken of as "David" or "my servant David." This prince is not the Messiah, our Lord; nor is he the high priest as others claim. The best evidence that this prince is not Christ is learned from the ordinances he is to observe as revealed in chapter xlvi, where we read that he is to worship himself and that he must bring burnt offerings and peace offerings; we also read of this prince having sons. All this shows that the prince is not identical with the Lord. Who is he then? He is the vice-regent of the King, a future prince of the house of David, who will represent the Lord on earth. David's throne will be established in Jerusalem. The Lord Jesus Christ will reign supreme over all; His throne is above the earth in the New Jerusalem. He will visit the earth and manifest His glory as King of kings and Lord of lords. This probably will be during the great celebrations of the feast of Tabernacles, when the nations send their representatives to Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of Hosts (Zech. xiv:16). Upon David's throne will sit this prince of David

*The Hebrew word translated "leader" is "prince."

as vice-regent. The enemy anticipating this has counterfeited this vice-regency in the spurious claims of the Roman pope.

This prince as the vice-regent, has to enter by the way of the porch of the eastern gateway, and he must also go out the same way (see also xlvi:2-8).

II. Concerning the Strangers and the Levites in Relation to the Temple Worship.

Then brought he me the way of the north gate before the house and I looked, and, behold, the glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord; and I fell upon my face. And the Lord said unto me, Son of man, mark well, and behold with thine eyes, and hear with thine ears all that I say unto thee concerning all the ordinances of the house of the Lord, and all the laws thereof; and mark well the entering in of the house, with every going forth of the sanctuary. And thou shalt say to the rebellious, even to the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord God; O ye house of Israel, let it suffice you of all your abominations. In that ye have brought into my sanctuary strangers, uncircumcised in heart, and uncircumcised in flesh, to be in my sanctuary, to pollute, it, even my house, when ye offer my bread, the fat and the blood, and they have broken my covenant because of all your abominations. And ye have not kept the charge of mine holy things: but ye have set keepers of my charge in my sanctuary for yourselves.

Thus saith the Lord God; No stranger, uncircumcised in heart, nor uncircumcised in flesh, shall enter into my sanctuary, of any stranger that is among the children of Israel. And the Levites that are gone away from me, when Israel went astray, which went astray away from me after their idols; they shall even bear their iniquity. Yet they shall be ministers in my sanctuary, having charge at the gates of the house, and ministering to the house: they shall slay the burnt offering and the sacrifice for the people, and they shall stand before them to minister unto them. Because they ministered unto them before their idols, and caused the house of Israel to fall into iniquity; therefore have I lifted up mine hand against them, saith the Lord God, and they shall bear their iniquity. And they shall not come near unto me, to do the office of a priest unto me, nor to come near to any of my holy things, in

the most holy place; but they shall bear their shame, and their abominations which they have committed. But I will make them keepers of the charge of the house, for all the service thereof, and for all that shall be done therein (verses 4-14).

Brought again through the north gate of the inner court, the prophet is face to face with the glory of the Lord which filled the house of the Lord, and Ezekiel fell on his face. Then the Lord addressed him. He is to mark well what he sees and what he hears concerning the ordinances and the laws of the house of the Lord. The temple is now repeatedly called the house of the Lord, the place where His glory dwells, exalted above the hills, to which the nations shall come (Isaiah ii:2). Israel in this message is reminded of the past. They were a rebellious house. This was the burden of the opening messages of the prophet (chapter ii, etc.). But now all must be and will be different. The abominations of the past, the pollution of His house and all else will now be put away. "Let it suffice you of all your abominations." They will no longer be tolerated, nor will converted Israel backslide again. He reminds them of their sinful past and of the demands of holiness for His house; all abominations and failures will cease. Uncircumcised in heart and in flesh shall not enter into the sanctuary of the Lord. Zechariah bears the same testimony: "In that day there shall be no more the Canaanite in the house of the Lord of hosts" (Zech. xiv:21). His people will then be holy; their new birth has taken place, the uncircumcised, stony heart is taken away and His Spirit is poured out upon them (chapter xxxvi:25-27).

Verses 10-14 concern the Levites; they are to bear their iniquity and be degraded as to their office. What Levites are meant, and when did they go away from the Lord? It cannot mean past generations of Levites. The offence must have been committed by them before the Lord appeared

in glory. It must be explained by what happened among the people before the Lord came, during the days of the false Messiah. At that time Israel will go far astray from the Lord and turn again to idols. In this apostasy the Levites have a share. "They ministered unto them before their idols and caused the house of Israel to fall into iniquity." When the Lord comes, when their sins are forgiven and they are cleansed, the Lord will deal accordingly with these Levites as announced in these verses. They shall bear their iniquity for their unfaithfulness. "They shall not come near unto me, to do the office of a priest unto me, nor to come near to any of my holy things, in the most holy; but they shall bear their shame, and their abominations which they have committed." Yet there will be service for them. "But I will make them keepers of the charge of the house, for all the service thereof, and for all that shall be done therein."

III. Concerning the Priests, the sons of Zadok, and their Duties.

But the priests, the Levites, the sons of Zadok, that kept the charge of my sanctuary when the children of Israel went astray from me, they shall come near to me to minister unto me, and they shall stand before me to offer unto me the fat and the blood, saith the Lord God: They shall enter into my sanctuary, and they shall come near to my table, to minister unto me, and they shall keep my charge.

And it shall come to pass, that when they enter in at the gates of the inner court, they shall be clothed with linen garments; and no wool shall come upon them, whiles they minister in the gates of the inner court, and within. They shall have linen bonnets upon their heads, and shall have linen breeches upon their loins; they shall not gird themselves with anything that causeth sweat. And when they go forth into the outer court, even into the outer court to the people, they shall put off their garments wherein they ministered, and lay them in the holy chambers, and they shall put on other garments; and they shall not sanctify the

people with their garments. Neither shall they shave their heads, nor suffer their locks to grow long; they shall only poll their heads. Neither shall any priest drink wine, when they enter into the inner court. Neither shall they take for their wives a widow, nor her that is put away: but they shall take maidens of the seed of the house of Israel, or a widow that had a priest before. And they shall teach my people the difference between the holy and profane, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean. And in controversy they shall stand in judgment; and they shall judge it according to my judgments: and they shall keep my laws and my statutes in all mine assemblies; and they shall hallow my sabbaths. And they shall come at no dead person to defile themselves; but for father, or for mother, or for son, or for daughter, for brother, or for sister that hath had no husband, they may defile themselves. And after he is cleansed, they shall reckon unto him seven days. And in the day that he goeth into the sanctuary, unto the inner court, to minister in the sanctuary, he shall offer his sin offering, saith the Lord God. And it shall be unto them for an inheritance: I am their inheritance; and ye shall give them no possession in Israel: I am their possession. They shall eat the meat offering, and the sin offering, and the trespass offering; and every dedicated thing in Israel shall be theirs. And the first of all the first fruits of all things and every oblation of all of every sort of your oblations, shall be the priests': ye shall also give unto the priest the first of your dough, that he may cause the blessing to rest in thine house. The priests shall not eat of any thing that is dead of itself, or torn, whether it be fowl or beast (verses 15-31).

The sons of Zadok kept the charge, they were faithful when the children of Israel went astray, and the Lord is now announcing the reward for their faithfulness. The earthly priesthood as it was once is re-established and vested in the sons of Zadok. These are to come near unto Jehovah and offer in His presence. How they are to come in, the garments they shall wear, is made known to the prophet. They are not to shave their heads, "neither shall any priest drink wine, when they enter into the inner court." They are forbidden to take for wives a widow or one that has been

put away. Maidens of Israel or a priest's widow they could marry. All this will be literally fulfilled and done when this new and true worship is instituted in the coming age. It has nothing whatever to do with our age. No such special class of an earthly priesthood exists during this age of grace. All believers constitute a holy and a royal priesthood; the priests of ritualistic Christendom are an invention. But when the Lord has restored Israel to their land and this great place of worship stands, priestly ministrations will be resumed. Neither will this be a denial of Him who is priest forever after the order of Melchizedec. While the spurious, man-made priesthood of this Christian age denies the Lord and His finished work, the future priesthood ministering in the millennial temple will glorify Him.

These priests will also be teachers and exercise judicial authority (verses 23-24). The law of defilement will be enforced, though there will be less possibility of such defilement, for death during the millennium will not be the rule as it is now, but a rare and exceptional occurrence. Finally we read of the inheritance of the priests who minister before the Lord. "I am their inheritance, and ye shall give them no possession in Israel; I am their possession." While many of these appointments in priestly ministry during the millennium are obscure to us who enjoy the heavenly things, we may rest assured that the Lord in His own time "in that day" will bring about the accomplishment of all He has spoken.

Chapter xlv.

I. The Holy Portion of the Land for the Sanctuary, the Priests, the Levites, the City and the Prince.

Moreover when ye shall divide by lot the land for inheritance, ye shall offer an oblation unto the Lord, an holy portion of the land: the length shall be the length of five and twenty thousand reeds, and the breadth shall be ten thousand. This shall be holy

in all the borders thereof round about. Of this there shall be for the sanctuary five hundred in length, with five hundred in breadth, square round about; and fifty cubits round about for the suburbs thereof. And of this measure shalt thou measure the length of five and twenty thousand, and the breadth of ten thousand: and in it shall be the sanctuary and the most holy place. The holy portion of the land shall be for the priests the ministers of the sanctuary, which shall come near to minister unto the Lord: and it shall be a place for their houses, and an holy place for the sanctuary. And the five and twenty thousand of length, and the ten thousand of breadth, shall also the Levites, the ministers of the house, have for themselves, for a possession for twenty chambers.

And ye shall appoint the possession of the city five thousand broad, and five and twenty thousand long, over against the oblation of the holy portion: it shall be for the whole house of Israel.

And a portion shall be for the prince on the one side and on the other side of the oblation of the holy portion, and of the possession of the city, before the oblation of the holy portion, and before the possession of the city, from the west side westward, and from the east side eastward: and the length shall be over against one of the portions, from the west border unto the east border. In the land shall be his possession in Israel: and my princes shall no more oppress my people; and the rest of the land shall they give to the house of Israel according to their tribes (verses 1-8).

The land possessed will be divided by lot for the inheritance of the people. The special territorial division for the different tribes is recorded in the last two chapters. They are to bring an oblation of the land which the Lord so graciously restored unto them. The word "oblation" is literally an "heave-offering," because when anything was offered to Jehovah the offerer raised the hand. The dimensions of the holy portion of the land are, in length 25,000, and in breadth 10,000. But what? The Hebrew has no definite measure. The authorized version supplies the word "reeds," which seems to be correct in view of the statement in chapter xlii:16.* This is a very large territory, a square of some

*Read our comment on this verse.

sixty miles on each side. The topography of Palestine will be entirely changed in the coming age, as we pointed out before. The land is to be greatly enlarged, while the temple-mountain will be highly exalted. These changes will make all possible which we read in these closing chapters. We must take these chapters in faith, knowing that the omnipotent Lord will accomplish all in his own time. In the center of this large area, the holy portion of the Lord, will be the sanctuary; the measurement is given in verse 2. Around this the priests have their portion; there they will have their houses. The estate of the Levites comes next; the measurement is given, and that they shall have for possession twenty chambers. The Septuagint has "cities to dwell in," habitations where they will reside. This is undoubtedly the correct meaning. Then the measurement of the city is given, which is for the whole house of Israel. Finally the portion of the Prince is recorded. "And the Prince shall have his portion on the one side and on the other side of the holy oblation, and of the possession of the city over against the holy oblation, and over against the possession of the city, from the west side westward, and from the east side eastward; and in length answering to one of the portions of the tribes from the west border unto the east border." From this we learn that the estate of the Prince consists of two halves, the one on the west and the other on the east of the holy portion. He stands as the head and ruler in closest connection with the sanctuary. It is all a new order and will be brought about when the Lord has come back, and when Israel is restored to the land. They never possessed such a holy portion in the land, nor such a sanctuary. A spiritual application as to the Church is impossible to make; the literal interpretation is the only possible one which can be made.

III. Exhortation Addressed to the Princes.

Thus saith the Lord God; Let it suffice you, O princes of Israel: remove violence and spoil, and execute judgment and justice, take away your exactions from my people, saith the Lord God. Ye shall have just balances, and a just ephah, and a just bath. The ephah and the bath shall be of one measure, that the bath may contain the tenth part of an homer, and the ephah the tenth part of an homer: the measure thereof shall be after the homer. And the shekel shall be twenty gerahs: twenty shekels, five and twenty shekels, fifteen shekels, shall be your maneh* (verses 9-12).

The princes who used to oppress the people, shall no longer oppress (verse 8). They are to execute judgment and justice. Every measure is to be just. The time has come when righteousness reigns. "He shall judge the poor of the people, he shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor" (Ps. lxxii:4). No longer will the poor be down-trodden.

IV. The Oblation for the Prince and His Offerings.

This is the oblation that ye shall offer; the sixth part of an ephah of an homer of wheat, and ye shall give the sixth part of an ephah of an homer of barley: Concerning the ordinance of oil, the bath of oil, ye shall offer the tenth part of a bath out of the cor, which is an homer of ten baths; for ten baths are an homer: And one lamb out of the flock, out of two hundred, out of the fat pastures of Israel; for a meat offering, and for a burnt offering, and for peace offerings, to make reconciliation for them, saith the Lord God. All the people of the land shall give this oblation for the prince in Israel. And it shall be the prince's part to give burnt offerings, and meat offerings, and drink offerings, in the feasts, and in the new moons, and in the sabbaths, in all solemnities of the house of Israel: he shall prepare the sin offering, and the meat offering, and the burnt offering, and the peace offerings, to make reconciliation for the house of Israel (verses 13-17).

What the ruling Prince, the vice-regent upon the throne

*The sixtieth part of a talent, about fifty shekels.

of David, is to receive from the people is stated in verses 13-16. The part of the Prince is to give burnt-offerings, meal offerings, drink offerings, at the different feasts and solemnities, to make reconciliation for the House of Israel. No doubt all this has a retrospective value and meaning. These sacrifices and offerings commemorate the one great sacrifice, which is constantly and vividly kept in full view by these ceremonies.

V. The Two Great Feasts: Passover and the Feast of Tabernacles.

> Thus saith the Lord God; In the first month, in the first day of the month, thou shalt take a young bullock without blemish, and cleanse the sanctuary: And the priest shall take of the blood of the sin offering, and put it upon the posts of the house, and upon the four corners of the settle of the altar, and upon the posts of the gate of the inner court. And so thou shalt do the seventh day of the month for every one that erreth, and for him that is simple: so shall ye reconcile the house. In the first month, in the fourteenth day of the month, ye shall have the passover, a feast of seven days; unleavened bread shall be eaten. And upon that day shall the prince prepare for himself and for all the people of the land a bullock for a sin offering. And seven days of the feast he shall prepare a burnt offering to the Lord, seven bullocks and seven rams without blemish daily the seven days; and a kid of the goats daily for a sin offering. And he shall prepare a meat offering of an ephah for a bullock, and an ephah for a ram, and an hin of oil for an ephah. In the seventh month, in the fifteenth day of the month, shall he do the like in the feast of the seven days, according to the sin offering, according to the burnt offering, and according to the meat offering, and according to the oil (verses 18-25).

First stands the cleansing of the sanctuary on the first day of the first month. The cleansing of the sanctuary therefore commences the year. And this offering of a young bullock without blemish shows forth Christ in His wonderful, unblemished devotedness as He suffered once for sin. The same sacrifice will be repeated on the seventh day, and it is

then especially for everyone that erreth and for him that is simple. The precious blood of the Lamb of God is thus constantly kept in remembrance. Two great feasts will be celebrated, the Passover and the Feast of Tabernacles. These are the feasts of the Millennium. Very significantly the feast of weeks, that is Pentecost, is no longer mentioned. Dispensationally the Feast of Pentecost typifies the coming of the Spirit of God, to baptize believing Jews and Gentiles into one body. Pentecost ushered in this present age, and during its course the Holy Spirit is on earth fulfilling His mission in calling from Jews and Gentiles a people for His name. When this age closes with the great predicted events transpiring, the Spirit of God has finished the work for which He came. The body of Christ is taken home to glory and united with the Head. It is true the Holy Spirit will yet be poured out upon all flesh (Joel ii:28) but the dispensational aspect of Pentecost is fulfilled and can have no such meaning in millennial times.*

And how appropriate it is that only Passover and the Feast of Tabernacles are celebrated by Israel when the Lord has come. Passover was first kept in Egypt; its precious meaning is well known to all Christians. Redemption by blood, so fully realized in the work of the spotless Lamb of God, is blessedly seen in the Passover, while the Feast of Unleavened Bread reveals the purpose of redemption—redemption unto holiness. Israel observed this feast in the wilderness. They celebrated it when they had come into the land; then under Hezekiah and Josiah it was recovered. During their long dispersion Israel has not forgotten this

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*The Feasts of Jehovah—Passover: The Cross and its work. First Fruits: Resurrection of Christ. Pentecost: The Gift of the Spirit and the calling of the Church. Feast of Trumpets: The Regathering of Israel. Day of Atonement: Israel's Cleansing. Feast of Tabernacles: The Millennium.

feast. Though with judicial blindness upon them, eyes that cannot see and ears that cannot hear, the people keep once a year the Passover. Longingly the orthodox Jew looks towards the land of promise and repeats each Passover night the pious wish "This day here; next year in Jerusalem." When the nation is regathered and the Kingdom is established in their midst, they will keep this Feast anew. What meaning it will then have! What memories cluster around it! How all their history will be recalled by that Feast—started in Egypt and consummated in the Kingdom! But the observance apart from the unleavened bread is different. The Prince and all the people on the fourteenth day of the first month are identified as they never were before, in a single bullock for a sin offering, while every day for seven days the Prince prepares a complete burnt offering, a sign of perfect consecration to the Lord. What praise the Lord, the Lamb of God enthroned in glory, and His glory covering the earth, will receive in these yearly memorial feasts.

The Feast of Tabernacles is the second great feast. It was kept by Israel when the harvest and the vintage had taken place. It foreshadows the Millennium, when the harvest and the vintage (Rev. xiv) the end of the age is passed and the new age, the age of glory, has come; the great ingathering has taken place and the prophetic meaning of the Feast of Tabernacles will be realized. Zechariah xiv:16-21 tells us of its Millennial celebration.

Chapter xlvi.

I. The Worship of the Prince.

Thus saith the Lord God; The gate of the inner court that looketh toward the east shall be shut the six working days; but on the sabbath it shall be opened, and in the day of the new moon it shall be opened. And the prince shall enter by the way of the porch of that gate without, and shall stand by the post of the gate, and the priests shall prepare his burnt offering and his peace offer-

> ings, and he shall worship at the threshold of the gate: then he shall go forth; but the gate shall not be shut until the evening. Likewise the people of the land shall worship at the door of this gate before the Lord in the sabbaths and in the new moons. And the burnt offering that the prince shall offer unto the Lord in the sabbath day shall be six lambs without blemish, and a ram without blemish. And the meat offering shall be an ephah for a ram, and the meat offering for the lambs as he shall be able to give, and an hin of oil to an ephah. And in the day of the new moon it shall be a young bullock without blemish, and six lambs, and a ram: they shall be without blemish. And he shall prepare a meat offering, an ephah for a bullock, and an ephah for a ram, and for the lambs according as his hand shall attain unto, and an hin of oil to an ephah. And when the prince shall enter, he shall go in by the way of the porch of that gate, and he shall go forth by the way thereof (verses 1-8).

Here another worship scene of the Millennium is described. The prominent eastern gate is to be closed during the six working days, but on the Sabbath it shall be opened, as well as in the day of the new moon. The Sabbath and the new moon are prominent in the worship of the Kingdom Age. The Sabbath was a type of the coming rest for the people of Israel.* This rest has now come. Their wanderings are ended, they are gathered from the East and from the West, from the North and South, and have found at last the promised rest (Ps. cvii:1-8). Therefore the Sabbath is especially mentioned in connection with worship. On the seventh day the gate through which the Lord and His glory passed is opened and left open till the evening. The six working days (typical of 6,000 years) are forever gone, the seventh day, the seventh thousand, the Day of the Lord, has come. And when the Millennium ends, the complete, eternal rest comes for all the people of God. The new moon is typical of Israel's re-establishment

*When it speaks of "my rest" in Hebrews iv it refers to the eternal rest.

as a nation. The nation, like the moon, had waned, and disappeared, but now she shines again like the new moon.

The Prince is to worship at the threshold of the gate, and the people before the gate. But neither the Prince nor the people enter within. No drawing near to God is known then as we now enjoy it who worship in the Spirit through the rent veil. It is all an earthly worship, while the true worship of the Church is heavenly. The Prince in this worship enters by the outer door on the side of the east and he goes out by the same door. The Prince occupies the prominent place as the representative of the people. He presents his offerings to Jehovah, while the people stand as worshippers at the outer gate of the same entrance. The offerings the Prince is to bring on the Sabbath are larger than those commanded in the law. Both the burnt-offering and the meal offering brought by him on the Sabbath are more abundant than those offered under the old dispensation, an evidence of the higher and more perfect worship of restored Israel. Different, however, is it with the offering on the new moon. In Numbers xxviii:11-15 we read:

> And in the beginnings of your months ye shall offer a burnt offering unto the Lord; two young bullocks, and one ram, seven lambs of the first year without spot; And three tenth deals of flour for a meal offering, mingled with oil, for one bullock; and two tenth deals of flour for a meal offering, mingled with oil, for one ram; And a several tenth deal of flour mingled with oil for a meal offering unto one lamb; for a burnt offering of a sweet savour, a sacrifice made by fire unto the Lord. And their drink offerings shall be half an hin of wine unto a bullock, and the third part of an hin unto a ram, and a fourth part of an hin unto a lamb: this is the burnt offering of every month throughout the months of the year. And one kid of the goats for a sin offering unto the Lord shall be offered, beside the continual burnt offering, and his drink offering.

Such are the offerings according to the law, to be brought

on the new moon. But in the millennial worship these offerings are diminished. All this has a deeper meaning which will be fully known and enjoyed when this worship is carried out.

II. Further Instructions as to Worship.

But when the people of the land shall come before the Lord in the solemn feasts, he that entereth in by the way of the north gate to worship shall go out by the way of the south gate; and he that entereth by the way of the south gate shall go forth by the way of the north gate; he shall not return by the way of the gate whereby he came in, but shall go forth over against it. And the prince in the midst of them, when they go in, shall go in; and when they go forth, shall go forth. And in the feasts and in the solemnities the meal offering shall be an ephah to a bullock, and an ephah to a ram, and to the lambs as he is able to give, and an hin of oil to an ephah. Now when the prince shall prepare a voluntary burnt offering or peace offerings voluntarily unto the Lord, one shall then open him the gate that looketh toward the east, and he shall prepare his burnt offering and his peace offerings, as he did on the sabbath day: then he shall go forth; and after his going forth one shall shut the gate. Thou shalt daily prepare a burnt offering unto the Lord of a lamb of the first year without blemish: thou shalt prepare it every morning. And thou shalt prepare a meal offering for it every morning, the sixth part of an ephah, and the third part of an hin of oil to temper with the fine flour, a meal offering continually by a perpetual ordinance unto the Lord. Thus shall they prepare the lamb and the meal offering, and the oil, every morning for a continual burnt offering (verses 9-15).

Everything is divinely ordered. Here are first the special instructions for the worship of the people of the land. When they come before the Lord in the solemn feasts some will enter in to worship by the north gate and leave by the south gate, and others who enter by the south gate will leave by the way of the north gate. None is permitted to leave by the gate through which he entered. Perhaps this injunction is given to avoid confusion among the multitudes who will come to

worship in those coming days, when the Lord will be universally acknowledged (Zech. xiv:9).

In the midst of these worshipping masses will be the Prince (verse 10). What a blessed reminder of Him who is the One in the midst! He was in the midst on Calvary; He is in the midst of His people during this age; in Revelation He is seen in the midst of the throne (Rev. v:6). The Prince as the representative of the King of kings is therefore in the midst of His redeemed earthly Israel. The burnt-offering and the meal offering, so prominent in this coming worship are constant memorials of His great devotion when He offered Himself, and of His holy, spotless humanity in which He suffered and glorified God.

Something else of deep interest is recorded here. The daily burnt-offerings during the old dispensation consisted of a lamb every morning and of a lamb every evening. Here no evening lamb for a burnt-offering is mentioned, but the offerings are to be brought only during the mornings. The bright morning has come, the day dawn for His people, so long in the night of suffering and dispersion. The night is gone forever and therefore the evening, preceding the night, is no longer mentioned and no provision is made for an evening burnt-offering. The night is gone and Israel's glorious morning can never be darkened again by apostasy.

III. Concerning the Prince, His Sons and Servants.

Thus saith the Lord God; If the prince give a gift unto any of his sons, the inheritance thereof shall be his sons'; it shall be their possession by inheritance. But if he give a gift of his inheritance to one of his servants, then it shall be his to the year of liberty; after it shall return to the prince: but his inheritance shall be his sons' for them. Moreover the prince shall not take of the people's inheritance by oppression, to thrust them out of their possession; but he shall give his sons inheritance out of his own possession: that my people be not scattered every man from his possession (verses 16-18).

Here we read that the Prince has sons, natural descendants, and whatever gifts he bestows upon them shall be their possession by inheritance. This is conclusive that the Prince of these last chapters of Ezekiel is not Christ. The Prince has sons and servants. As the entire final vision of this book deals with the earthly conditions of the coming age, and reveals nothing of the heavenly side of things, these sons and servants cannot mean the church-saints, who are with Christ in the New Jerusalem. As to a gift to one of the Prince's servants, it is to revert to his sons when the year of liberty or jubilee is celebrated. The jubilee year will therefore be observed during the coming age.

IV. Additional Description of Temple Buildings.

After he brought me through the entry, which was at the side of the gate, into the holy chambers of the priests, which looked toward the north: and, behold, there was a place on the two sides westward. Then said he unto me, This is the place where the priests shall boil the trespass offering and the sin offering, where they shall bake the meal offering; that they bear them not out into the utter court, to sanctify the people. Then he brought me forth into the utter court, and caused me to pass by the four corners of the court; and, behold, in every corner of the court there was a court. In the four corners of the court there were courts joined of forty cubits long and thirty broad: these four corners were of one measure. And there was a row of building round about in them, round about them four, and it was made with boiling places under the rows round about. Then said he unto me, These are the places of them that boil, where the ministers of the house shall boil the sacrifice of the people (verses 19-24).

Again the prophet is brought by the northern gate to the side where the holy chambers of the priests are located. There he saw a place on the two sides westward. The use of this place is made known in Verse 20. The final description of buildings round about the court needs no further comment.

THE VISION CONCERNING THE LAND.

Chapter xlvii.

The preceding chapters of this final section of the Book of Ezekiel contain the vision of the Temple and its worship. The last two chapters give a vision of Israel's land as it will be during the coming age.

I. The Temple Stream and its Healing Waters.

Afterward he brought me again unto the door of the house; and, behold, waters issued out from under the threshold of the house eastward: for the forefront of the house was the east, and the waters came down from under from the right side of the house, from the south of the altar. Then brought he me out by the way of the gate northward, and led me about the way without unto the outer gate toward the gate that looketh eastward; and, behold, there ran out waters on the right side. And when the man went forth eastward, he had a line in his hand, and he measured a thousand cubits, and he brought me through the waters; the waters were to the ankles. Again he measured a thousand, and brought me through the waters; the waters were to the knees. Again he measured a thousand, and brought me through; the waters were to the loins. Afterward he measured a thousand; and it was a river that I could not pass over: for the waters were risen, waters to swim in, a river that could not be passed over.

And he said unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen this? Then he brought me, and caused me to return to the brink of the river. Now when I had returned, behold, at the bank of the river were very many trees on the one side and on the other. Then said he unto me, These waters issue out toward the east country, and go down into the desert, and go into the sea: which being brought forth into the sea, the waters shall be healed. And it shall come to pass, that every thing that liveth, which moveth, whithersoever the rivers shall come, shall live: and there shall be a very great multitude of fish, because these waters shall come thither: for they shall be healed; and every thing shall live whither the river cometh. And it shall come to pass, that the fishers shall stand upon it from En-gedi even unto En-eglaim; they shall be a place to spread forth nets; their fish shall be according to their kinds, as the fish of the great sea, exceeding many. But the marshes thereof and the pools

thereof shall not be healed: they shall be given to salt. And by the river upon the bank thereof, on this side and on that side, shall grow all trees for meat, whose leaf shall not fade, neither shall the fruit thereof be consumed: it shall bring forth new fruit according to his months, because their waters they issued out of the sanctuary: and the fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaf thereof for medicine (verses 1-12).

This great vision of the Temple stream has been variously interpreted. The critical school has treated it only as an imagery of the prophet and speaks of the physical impossibility that such a stream could ever be in existence.* Others have spiritualized the vision. A leading annotator states, "Messiah is the temple and the door; from His pierced side flow the living waters, ever increasing, both in the individual believer and in the heart." In this spiritualizing method the waters are also applied to the reading and study of the Word of God. The same commentator says "some things in the Bible are easy to understand, as the water up to the ankles; others more difficult, which require deeper search, as the waters up to the knees and the loins; and others beyond our reach." Such applications can be made in different ways. The stream which Ezekiel saw is more than typical of the blessings which the land and all the earth will enjoy in the coming age. It is a literal stream. There will be a great outpouring of the Spirit of God for the age to come, and spiritual blessings will abound everywhere. But the stream Ezekiel beholds tells of the physical blessings which are in store for the earth in that coming day of the restoration of all things. We do not need to trouble ourselves about the manner in which the

*One says: "The double impossibility of the rapid rise of water in the stream and the course of the river across the steep limestone range east of Jerusalem into the Dead Sea does not occur to the prophet." As if Ezekiel had invented this vision.

temple stream is to flow forth, nor do we need to solve the physical difficulties. When the Lord of Creation was on earth in humiliation, and walked among men garbed in servant's form, nature acknowledged Him and He manifested the Creator's power. What will it be when He comes again, not as a servant to die, but as the King and Lord of all! Omnipotence will then be displayed to the full. Is there anything too hard for the Lord? (Jer. xxxii:27). He who bore the thorns on His brow, the symbol of the curse which on account of man's sin rests upon Creation, will remove that curse in the day of His power. He paid for it on the cross.

And Ezekiel was not the only prophet to whom was revealed the physical blessing of the earth in the life and health giving stream. Isaiah had the same vision. "And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water; in the habitation of jackals where each lay shall be grass with reeds and rushes" (Isa. xxxv:7). "I will even make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert" (Isa. xliii:19). "Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree" (Isa. lv:15). "The desert shall blossom like the rose" (Isa. xxxv:1). Joel at the close of his great vision concerning the still future day of Israel's tribulation and the judgment of the nations following the time of trouble, and the Lord's visible manifestation, also speaks of the blessings of the Millennium. "And it shall come to pass in that day, that the mountains shall drop down new wine, and the hills shall flow with milk, and all the rivers of Judah shall flow with waters, and a fountain shall come forth of the house of the Lord, and shall water the valley of Shittim" (Joel iii:18). Joel, one of the earliest prophets, living centuries before Ezekiel, saw water coming forth from the house of the Lord for earthly blessings. Still more definite is the great

post-exilic prophet Zechariah. "And it shall be in that day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem; half of them toward the eastern sea, and half of them toward the hinder sea; in summer and in winter shall it be" (Zech. xiv:8).

The waters Ezekiel saw issued out from under the threshold, from the right side of the house, the southside of the altar. Of the heavenly Jerusalem a similar scene is recorded by John in the Revelation. "And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb" (Rev. xxii:1). The stream has its origin in the midst of the millennial temple. There is no use in speculating about the source of the water supply. It is super-natural. He who said, "Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters" (Gen. i:6) and He who broke open all the fountains of the deep when His judgment came on the earth (Gen. vii:11) by whose power also the smitten rock in the wilderness supplied the water for His people, He will provide from His inexhaustible resources the life giving stream. And the waters which gush forth are increasing in volume; the stream does not become shallower but deepens in its flow. It is not like a natural river which has its source in a spring and is fed by brooks and rivers. It is a miraculous, unexplainable self-supply which occasions this increase. A thousand cubits are measured and the waters come to the ankles of the prophet. The next thousand cubits bring the waters to the knees; then advancing another thousand cubits the waters come to the loins, and with the fourth thousand they become so deep that the prophet could not fathom them. The four thousand cubits make about a mile and a half, so that the prophet had advanced, under the guidance of the man, this distance from Jerusalem in a southeastern direction.

He is caused to return to the bank of the river, and saw

there on both sides many trees. These trees testify of the great fertility which this stream will produce in nature. Expositors who give the vision a purely spiritual meaning explain the trees as being the righteous who shall flourish at the waterbrooks (Psalm i).

The man informs the prophet that these waters go toward the east country and go down into the desert. The word desert in Hebrew is "Arabah" and means "plain," which is the plain of Jordan. It signifies a parched, dry place. Jordan is the type of death, and the sea of salt, the Dead Sea, into which Jordan flows, also signifies death.* And now in the Dead Sea this living water from the temple flows, and healing is the blessed result. Where death has reigned so long abundant life now is manifested. Sodom is restored to its former estate (See chapter xvi). Wheresoever the waters go life follows at once. "There shall be a very great multitude of fish, because these waters shall come thither, for they shall be healed; and everything shall live whither the river cometh. The fishers shall stand up from En-gedi unto En-eglaim." En-gedi is on the one end and En-eglaim at the other end of the Dead Sea. Yet there will be marshes and pools which remain unhealed; their former condition is unchanged. It has been suggested that this is done for the production of salt. But it is rather a reminder that while the coming age is an age of wonderful blessing, that it is not yet the perfect, eternal age. And the trees will be ever green, never failing, providing meat by their abundant fruit and the leaf is for medicine. It shows the gracious provision made for man living on the earth during the age to come. Poverty, famine and sickness will be banished.

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*Psa. lxviii:4 has this word "Arabah"; in the Authorized Version it is translated "heaven." It is in the plural, "Araboth"—"Cast up the way for him that rideth in Araboth"—the places of death. Christ is seen prophetically as the Conqueror of death and Sheol.

II. The Borders of the Land.

Thus saith the Lord God; This shall be the border, whereby ye shall inherit the land according to the twelve tribes of Israel: Joseph shall have two portions. And ye shall inherit it, one as well as another: concerning the which I lifted up mine hand to give it unto your fathers: and this land shall fall unto you for inheritance. And this shall be the border of the land toward the north side, from the great sea, the way of Hethlon, as men go to Zedad: Hamath, Berothah, Sibraim, which is between the border of Damascus and the border of Hamath; Hazar-hatticon, which is by the coast of Hauran. And the border from the sea shall be Hazar-enan, the border of Damascus, and the north northward, and the border of Hamath. And this is the north side. And the east side ye shall measure from Hauran, and from Damascus, and from Gilead, and from the land of Israel by Jordan, from the border unto the east sea. And this is the east side. And the south side southward, from Tamar even to the waters of strife in Kadesh, the river to the great sea. And this is the south side southward. The west side also shall be the great sea from the border, till a man come over against Hamath. This is the west side. So shall ye divide this land unto you according to the tribes of Israel (verses 13-21).

Little comment is needed on these verses. That the literal land and the literal tribes are meant, no intelligent readers can deny. The twelve tribes are then back in the land. The so-called "lost tribes" are united with the house of Judah. Here the borders are given. Joseph has two portions. God is faithful. He has not forgotten His gracious promises of old. "And ye shall inherit it, one as well as another, concerning which I lifted up mine hand (in oath) to give it unto your fathers; and this land shall fall unto your inheritance." The whole land is to be divided according to the tribes of Israel.

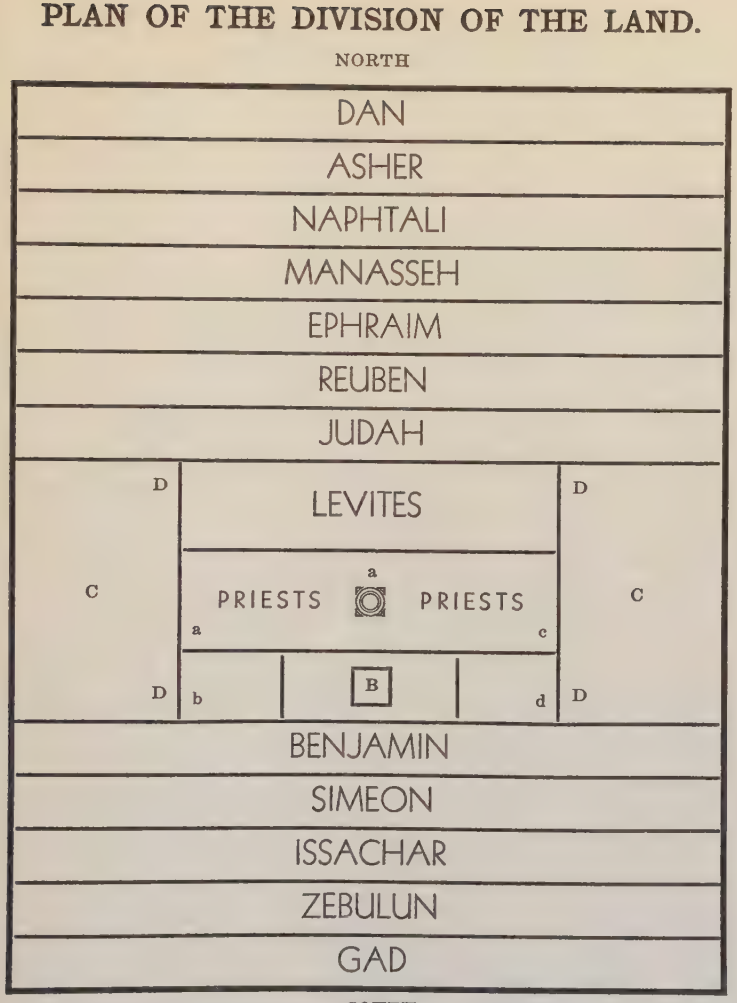
III. Concerning the Stranger in the Land.

And it shall come to pass, that ye shall divide it by lot for an inheritance unto you, and to the strangers that sojourn among you, which shall beget children among you: and they shall be unto you

as born in the country among the children of Israel; they shall have inheritance with you among the tribes of Israel. And it shall come to pass, that in what tribe the stranger sojourneth, there shall ye give him his inheritance, saith the Lord God (verses 22-23).

Here is a provision for the strangers. They are no longer to be treated as outcasts, as aliens from the commonwealth of Israel; they are seen fully identified with Israel and share the inheritance. This again confirms other prophecies (See Isaiah lx:1-10). The strangers shall come and build the walls, and join themselves to Israel. The singing times for Israel have come. No longer will the chosen people be the tail of nations, but the head of all nations. "Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion, for, lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the Lord. And many nations shall be joined to the Lord in that day and shall be my people, and I will dwell in the midst of thee. . . . ." (Zech. ii:10-12). No longer will the Jew be despised, but the strangers, the nations, will beseech him to take them to the glory land. "Thus saith the Lord of hosts, In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men out of all languages of the nations shall take hold, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you" (Zech. viii:23).

PLAN OF THE DIVISION OF THE LAND.



A=The Sanctuary and its Area.
B=The City of Jerusalem.
C=The Possession of the Prince.
D=The Entire Oblation.
a-b-c-d=Territory belonging to City

THE PORTION OF THE TRIBES; THE TERRITORY OF THE OBLATION; THE CITY, ITS GATES AND NEW NAME.

Chapter xlviii.

I. The portion of Seven Tribes.

Now these are the names of the tribes. From the north end to the coast of the way of Hethlon, as one goeth to Hamath, Hazar-enan, the border of Damascus northward, to the coast of Hamath; for these are his sides east and west; a portion for Dan. And by the border of Dan, from the east side unto the west side, a portion for Asher. And by the border of Asher, from the east side even unto the west side, a portion for Naphtali. And by the border of Naphtali, from the east side unto the west side, a portion for Manasseh. And by the border of Manasseh, from the east side unto the west side, a portion for Ephraim. And by the border of Ephraim, from the east side even unto the west side, a portion for Reuben. And by the border of Reuben, from the east side unto the west side, a portion for Judah.

And by the border of Judah, from the east side unto the west side, shall be the offering which ye shall offer of five and twenty thousand reeds in breadth, and in length as one of the other parts, from the east side unto the west side: and the sanctuary shall be in the midst of it (verses 1-8).

The division of the land to the twelve tribes, then fully restored, is by lot (xlvii:22) but the disposing of it will be by the Lord (Prov. xvi:33). The order is entirely different from the one found in the Book of Joshua (Josh. xv-xix). Up to the time of the carrying away of the ten tribes and the captivity of Judah, the tribes possessed the territory assigned to them by lot when they entered the land under Joshua. The ten tribes never returned from the captivity, and therefore the division of the land as given here has never been in the history of Israel. It is future. The division is in twelve portions all alike in dimensions, running alongside of each other, from west to east. Seven tribes are in the north,

and five in the south. Between the seven tribes in the north and the tribes in the south is the oblation, the heave offering, the portion of the prince, the Levites and the priests, the Temple and the city with its surrounding territory. The tribe of Dan has its portion in the extreme north. It is the furthest away from the sanctuary. Dan was a corrupt tribe, semi-heathen (Judges xviii). Dan is not mentioned among the sealed one in Revelation vii. All the other tribes are placed in a different order from the former position.

II. The Oblation; the Remaining Tribes.

The oblation that ye shall offer unto the Lord shall be of five and twenty thousand in length, and of ten thousand in breadth. And for them, even for the priests, shall be this holy oblation; toward the north five and twenty thousand in length, and toward the west ten thousand in breadth, and toward the east ten thousand in breadth, and toward the south five and twenty thousand in length: and the sanctuary of the Lord shall be in the midst thereof. It shall be for the priests that are sanctified of the sons of Zadok; which have kept my charge, which went not astray when the children of Israel went astray, as the Levites went astray. And this oblation of the land that is offered shall be unto them a thing most holy by the border of the Levites. And over against the border of the priests the Levites shall have five and twenty thousand in length, and ten thousand in breadth: all the length shall be five and twenty thousand, and the breadth ten thousand. And they shall not sell of it, neither exchange, nor alienate the first-fruits of the land: for it is holy unto the Lord.

And the five thousand, that are left in the breadth over against the five and twenty thousand, shall be a profane place for the city, for dwelling, and for suburbs: and the city shall be in the midst thereof. And these shall be the measures thereof; the north side four thousand and five hundred, and the south side four thousand and five hundred, and on the east side four thousand and five hundred, and the west side four thousand and five hundred. And the suburbs of the city shall be toward the north two hundred and fifty, and toward the south two hundred and fifty, and toward the east two hundred and fifty, and toward the west two hundred and fifty. And the residue in length over against

the oblation of the holy portion shall be ten thousand eastward, and ten thousand westward: and it shall be over against the oblation of the holy portion; and the increase thereof shall be for food unto them that serve the city. And they that serve the city shall serve it out of all the tribes of Israel. All the oblation shall be five and twenty thousand by five and twenty thousand: ye shall offer the holy oblation foursquare, with the possession of the city.

And the residue shall be for the prince, on the one side and on the other of the holy oblation, and of the possession of the city, over against the five and twenty thousand of the oblation toward the east border, and westward over against the five and twenty thousand toward the west border, over against the portions for the prince: and it shall be the holy oblation; and the sanctuary of the house shall be in the midst thereof. Moreover from the possession of the Levites, and from the possession of the city, being in the midst of that which is the prince's, between the border of Judah and the border of Benjamin, shall be for the prince. As for the rest of the tribes, from the east side unto the west side, Benjamin shall have a portion. And by the border of Benjamin, from the east side unto the west side, Simeon shall have a portion. And by the border of Simeon, from the east side unto the west side, Issachar a portion. And by the border of Issachar, from the east side unto the west side. Zebulun a portion. And by the border of Zebulun, from the east side unto the west side, Gad a portion. And by the border of Gad, at the south side southward, the border shall be even from Tamar unto the waters of strife in Kadesh, and to the river toward the great sea. This is the land which ye shall divide by lot unto the tribes of Israel for inheritance, and these are their portions, saith the Lord God (verses 9-29).

Judah's portion on the north and Benjamin's portion on the south border are an oblation, that which is offered unto the Lord. In this space of large dimensions are the portions of the Levites and the priests. The Temple stands in the middle of the portion of the priests, and adjoining is the holy city and its territory.* The Prince has his portion on both sides of the oblation, the heave offering. That Judah and Ben-

*Consult sketch.

jamin are bordering on these holy sections is not without meaning. Judah is the royal tribe. He who is now worshipped by His restored people is the Lion of the tribe of Judah, Israel's King. Judah means "praise." He receives the praises of His people. Benjamin's other name was Benoni, "the son of suffering" and Benjamin is "the son of the right hand." Both Judah and Benjamin are a reminder of the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is impossible to explain fully the measurements given and other details of this chapter. We believe what God has written, and when the time has come He will surely see to it that all is done according to His word. We do not need to trouble ourselves with supposed difficulties or try to solve them. As stated before in this exposition, Israel's land will undergo a wonderful change when the Lord comes; these physical changes are unknown to us in their extent. The division of the land, and the setting apart of the oblation will then take place. The details in all these visions are of little importance to us. The main fact is to see that all these prophecies have remained unfulfilled up to now. Nor will they be fulfilled during the present age. As every judgment prediction of the prophecies of Ezekiel, uttered before the destruction of Jerusalem, was fulfilled, so every prediction of glory and blessing in the prophecies spoken after the destruction of the city will be fulfilled. It all awaits His coming and glorious appearing. Let us hold fast this and leave the accomplishment of every detail to the Lord.

III. The Gates of the City and its new Name.

And these are the goings out of the city on the north side, four thousand and five hundred measures. And the gates of the city shall be after the names of the tribes of Israel: three gates northward; one gate of Reuben, one gate of Judah, one gate of Levi. And at the east side four thousand and five hundred: and three gates; and one gate of Joseph, one gate of Benjamin, one gate of

> Dan. And at the south side four thousand and five hundred measures: and three gates; one gate of Simeon, one gate of Issachar, one gate of Zebulun. At the west side four thousand and five hundred, with their three gates; one gate of Gad, one gate of Asher, one gate of Naphtali. It was round about eighteen thousand measures: and the name of the city from that day shall be, The Lord is there (verses 30-35).

The city, the earthly Jerusalem, during the Kingdom age, will have twelve gates, after the twelve tribes of Israel. The gates on the north side are the gates of Reuben, Judah and Levi. The gates on the east are those of Joseph, Benjamin and Dan. Then the gates on the south—gates of Simeon, Issachar and Zebulun. The west side gates are the gates of Gad, Asher and Naphtali. Ephraim and Manasseh are no longer mentioned, but are represented in Joseph. Some expositors have made the statement that the city, Jerusalem with its gates, is an Old Testament description of the same Jerusalem which John beheld in the isle of Patmos (Rev. xxi). John saw the new Jerusalem, Ezekiel the earthly city as it will exist during the Millennium. There are correspondencies, and yet greater distinctions. Here in Ezekiel a Temple is the center of the land; in Revelation we read the seer's word, "I saw no temple therein" (Rev. xxi:22). The heavenly Jerusalem, like the earthly Jerusalem in Ezekiel's vision, has the twelve gates and written on them the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. The wall of the heavenly Jerusalem has twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. No wall and no foundations are mentioned by Ezekiel in connection with the millennial Jerusalem. The heavenly Jerusalem is four square, "the length and the breadth and the height of it are equal." Such is not the case with the earthly city. Nor is there mention made by Ezekiel of the precious stones, and the twelve gates, composed every gate of one pearl; nor do we read of golden streets. The earthly

Jerusalem will pass away, and when at last the new heaven and the new earth have come into existence, after the millennial reign of Christ, the new Jerusalem will descend out of heaven and find its eternal resting place upon the new earth.

The circumference of the city of Jerusalem according to Ezekiel's vision will be 18,000 reeds, about six miles. Then comes the majestic ending, the last word the man of God pronounced. "And the name of that city from that day shall be 'Jehovah Shammah,' the Lord is there." It is a fitting finale to this great Book. In its beginning we see the glory of the Lord departing. Throughout the pages of the Book we read of Israel's rebellion, Jerusalem's judgments, the nation's disobedience and rejection. Then follow the messages of Hope —Israel's conversion, the regathering of the twelve tribes, the final conflict, the returning glory of the Lord; and from that day the name of the city will be Jehovah Shammah. Because He has manifested His gracious presence in the midst of His people and established His throne, blessed His people with all the spiritual and national blessings promised by His holy prophets, destroyed all their enemies, and covers all with His visible glory once more, therefore the city will have the name "Jehovah is there." What a glory it will be for Him. The city through which He once walked with weary feet, the Son of God garbed in servant's form; the city through which He was dragged, when the cross was laid upon His shoulders, the city which cast Him out, the city outside of which He endured the cross and despised the shame—that same city will be made in that day the glory spot of the earth.

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